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Our Internet Portal is pleased to offer a printed version of its selected e-publications, which include exclusive interviews, analytical reviews and commentaries covering the period from June 2005 through February 2006. They deal with topical issues of Belarus relations with the European Union, with its direct neighbors and the leading world powers, as well as look into various aspects of its domestic policies in the European and global contexts.

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I. Belarus and The European Union

ANTANAS VALIONIS: «THE CURRENT SITUATION ALLOWS US TO RECONSIDER THE EXISTING EU POLICY»

An exclusive interview of the Lithuanian Republic Minister of Foreign Affairs

Lithuania was one among the first European Union countries to ratify the EU Constitution. Following frustrated results of the referendums in France and Netherlands, the future of this document has become unclear. A crisis is obvious in the European Union. What is today's stand of Vilnius to overcome the difficulties?

- A.V. In the past, there have been instants when the EU member states could not reach agreement on important issues. However, the experience shows that, sooner or later, a consensus will be reached. Undoubtedly, it is very difficult to avoid contradictions when solutions are to be taken unanimously, as in the case of the new financial perspective or ratification of the Treaty on the Constitution for Europe. In our opinion, the EU Constitution is a document that should reinforce the EU, making the EU policy more consistent and helping the EU to reach a greater unity in the world. We have expressed this opinion by ratifying this document.

I think that «No» given at the EU Constitution referendums in some countries clearly proves the need of reforms in the EU. Voting against the Constitution, people expressed their disagreement with the existing situation. Even by voting against the treaty aimed at reforming the European Union, though it may seem paradoxical. We see also positive aspects in the current situation. It will allow us to reconsider the existing EU policy and will stimulate serious discussions about the future lines of development in Europe. This is positive, because it will allow the EU to cope with the exciting problems in a more effective way. It is essential to reach agreement on the most important issues; above all, an agreement on the new financial perspective. I am sure that there is a firm political resolve to do this. As regards the EU Constitution, following two unfavourable referendums in France and Netherlands, it has been ratified by four other countries.

One year after the accession to the European Union, the number of EU supporters in Lithuania is rather great. It is even greater than I expected; it means they are not disenchanted

with the EU membership. Before the accession, we had not given non-realistic pledges, and now citizens of Lithuania can feel the impact of the European policy.

The activism and positive dynamics of the Lithuanian foreign policy in the light of the European Union good neighbourhood policy in relation to the so-called «new neighbours» of the EU are widely recognized. It is not a secret that the EU policy is becoming more rigid, for example, in relation to such neighbour as Belarus. Hence, many observers are inclined to see that Vilnius shows, so to say, improvisation in its policy towards the Belarusian neighbour. That is, the demonstration of a less rigid approach. What is your attitude to opinions of these observers?

- **A.V.** I would like to state that Lithuania, as a member state of the European Union, agrees with the EU policy in relation to the Republic of Belarus, and our activity in relations with Belarus is not accidental. Firstly, we should not forget that Belarus is a neighbour state, related to Lithuania not only by a common border (which is the eastern border of the EU!), but also by close economic and social ties and a common historical experience. Secondly, Lithuania is not interested in restricting mutual relations with its neighbours; therefore, a rigid, sometimes even too rigid stand of the EU, may have impact on the already established mutually beneficial relations among neighbours. For this reason, this policy of Lithuania deserves the name of what you called «improvisation». We do not think that this is bad, because it proves, once again, that we have selected the right way in developing our relations with Belarus, both bilaterally and at the European level.

Both states try to preserve and further develop the links that are beneficial for the populations of our states, without breaking social ties and developing businesses. The EU is concerned about human rights and development of civil society, which is reflected in its policy. These aspects of relations are not alien to us; therefore, preserving our positions, we are trying to find solutions acceptable for both parties.

According to some mass media, Vilnius is concerned about the fact that the current scandal around the Russian-Estonian Treaty on the border signifies the beginning of a comprehensive review of the Moscow policy towards Baltic States, making it more rigid. Can we consider the fact of not inviting, defiantly, the President of Lithuania to the festivity in Kaliningrad as a manifestation of such more rigid policy of Russia?

- **A.V.** Russia made a decision that is difficult to understand — not to invite Presidents of Lithuania and Poland, neighbours and essential partners of the Kaliningrad Oblast, to attend festivities devoted to the Day of the City in Kaliningrad. We do not understand what were the objectives of the Russian party — they missed the opportunity to make a powerful impetus for developing neighbourhood relations and cooperation.

We could have seen various complicated issues in the relations between Lithuania and Russia; however, they have been resolved by mutual efforts in a constructive spirit. The fact of non-inviting is not beneficial for Russia itself and has not imparted any constructiveness to our relations. However, we are sure that this will not have a major impact on our relations.

There is a growing tension between Warsaw and Minsk, which is driven by the situations around the Union of Poles in Belarus. The festivities in Kaliningrad and the growing activity of the Russian «Gazprom» can hardly add any «warmth» to the cooled relations between Vil-

nius and Moscow. The rigid anti-Western policy of the official Minsk can be added to this list of negative events. What is your opinion, Mr. Minister: can we speak about some special situations around the region of Lithuania–Kaliningrad–Poland–Belarus?

- A.V. Expansion of the EU and NATO, democratic revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, their orientation towards European integration, the similar stand of Moldova have radically changed the situation in the Central and Eastern Europe. Very important geopolitical changes have taken place over a very brief period of time. For example, the Kaliningrad Oblast has become a neighbour of two countries from the European Union, which opens unprecedented opportunities for development in this region. Now, it is very important to find tools meeting the interests of the EU and Russia and to develop projects making this happening.

Belarus is a European country and the people of Belarus deserve living in a democratic, modern and prosperous state. Unfortunately, A. Lukashenko is more oriented towards the USSR of the period of stagnation, though we all know too well what happened to the USSR. The only way forward is democratization and reforms. Belarus, first of all, needs a strong civil society — this is the first step towards creation of a democratic and prosperous state.

What is, in your opinion, the future international event that can be considered the main event in the remaining months of 2005?

- A.V. I think that even the most important event will not turn the world over. More important are not the events, but problems and issues that should be solved. We know these issues; therefore, we will strive to find positive solutions to these issues through joint efforts of international public.

Questions were asked by Roman Yakovlevsky. 22.09.05.

BRONISLAW GEREMEK: «THE BELARUSIAN REGIME IS A DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN THE REGION»

Eleven known Polish public figures called to support Belarusian democrats.

Eleven known Polish public figures made a call to support Belarusian democrats. This call was signed by the film director Andrzej Wajda, one of the most known leaders of «Solidarity» Bogdan Borusewicz, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Wladislaw Bartoszewski ...

More and more Polish politicians openly speak about the fact that radical sanctions will be applied against Belarusian officials and their entry to Poland will be significantly restricted. In particular, the view on the situation was presented by Bogdan Borusewicz, one of the leaders of the Pomorskie region. When Mr. Borusewicz was the Vice Prime Minister, he was the head of the joint Belarusian–Polish Commission on interregional cooperation. Now he is member of the Senate (in the past, he was twice elected member of the Parliament) and says that he will personally initiate introduction of economic sanctions against Belarus. He explains this radical change of his views as follows:

- Poland was against the sanctions towards Belarus which were proposed by the European Union. This is explained by the fact that we are neighbours and must solve specific issues together. Besides, we did not want to make the life of Polish minorities in Belarus more complicated. These were two reasons which made us come against sanctions proposed by the European Union. Moreover, when the EU prohibited entry visas to some Belarusian officials, Poland did not follow suit. However, now it is quite probable that, following parliamentary and presidential elections, our country will come up with the initiative in the European Parliament to introduce economic sanctions against Belarus. Recently, the trade turnover of Belarus with the EU countries has made almost 40%. And this is a serious argument!

The former head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland and current deputy of the European Parliament Bronisław Geremek thinks that Europe will support such initiatives. The former minister stresses that the Belarusian regime is a destabilising factor in the region and they have to respond adequately to this.

- Until recently, there has been a weighty argument in the European Union that Belarus is a lost cause and, therefore, no need to deal with it. Or else, it is no use dealing with it, because they will not allow doing anything, there. And only in the recent time, primarily through the influence of representatives of Poland and Lithuania, they have begun to understand that more resolute actions are needed. Now, it is very important that Europe should not view anymore the affairs of Belarus as affairs of Poland, Lithuania or Slovakia, but as affairs of the entire Europe. I think we have found the right direction in this respect.

This point of view of the former minister is shared by another former minister, now deputy of the European Parliament Dariusz Rosati:

- Until now, the European Union has thought that Belarus is a country located somewhere in ... Australia. However, Belarus has become a direct neighbour of the European Union and has a common border with it. And this fact should be taken into consideration. Because we, Poles, cannot agree, for example, with the stand of France which thinks that Belarus — and until recently Ukraine — are within the interests of Russia exclusively. We do not agree with this, because we are concerned with what is happening just across our border. We want to see Belarus and Ukraine democratic countries. I want to remind that the European Union has no contacts with President Lukashenko. However, we must also give much more support to non-governmental organisations in Belarus, especially to students and young people. The Belarusian people, just as the Ukrainians, will come to power by itself. However, what is needed is that the Belarusian young people clearly see the difference between the authoritarian and totalitarian system and market democracy which exists in our countries.

Incidentally, the letter signed by eleven public figures reminds that only one year ago the Polish public warned that repressions against Belarusian citizens would be enhanced. However, the support from the Polish state «was limited by verbal support». This is little, because the atmosphere of Stalin-epoch fears, as well as the cult of Stalin are revived in the Belarusian society. In opinion of those who signed the letter, the situation in Belarus is becoming critical. Therefore, it needs specific support and interests on the part of the European Union, including the adoption of the «joint policy in relation to Russia, because there may be no normal cooperation between Moscow and democratic states while Russia supports the dictatorship».

Poles can be understood — they want to see Belarus as a reliable partner and predictable neighbour. And this can be only a democratic, sovereign and European Belarus.

Vladimir Glod. Gdansk–Warsaw–Minsk. 29.09.05.

EUROPE' GROWING CONCERN WITH THE BELARUSIAN SITUATION

The European Parliament is pressing on the European Commission to facilitate democratisation in Belarus, while Moscow is pressing on Lukashenko in its own interests

In the last months, the European Parliament has taken several resolutions on the policy of the official Minsk, containing strict lines. The last resolution was dated 29 September last year. What should be done with this European enfant terrible? Among other measures, in item 17, the European Parliament «calls on the Council and the Commission to raise the issue of Belarus in the negotiations with the Russian authorities so as to outline joint responsibility for actions that would lead to concrete democratic transformations in this country». This thesis is repeated in different resolutions with small variations. Thus, if we look up the similar document of 7 July 2005, we will find actually the same wording in item 16. This refrain already causes noticeable irritation among a significant part of internal political opponents of Lukashenko. They think that such appellation to the Kremlin is like of a voice of one crying in the wilderness. Therefore, they raise a sharp rhetorical question: Is it time for the West to renounce its illusions about the beneficial role of Moscow in the hypothetical process of refinement of the Belarusian regime?

It is indicative that leaders of the right Russian opposition call on Europe to see the Kremlin not through rosy glasses. We had a talk in Brussels with Grigory Yavlinsky, leader of the Russian party «Yabloko». Visiting Brussels on the invitation of the European Parliament, this Moscow leader called Western colleagues not to close their eyes on the authoritarian character of the Putin regime, who started to curb democracy and civil freedoms in the country. We think it is useful to reproduce a fragment of our talk in literal terms.

The last resolution of the European Parliament on Belarus again has a note of hope: allegedly, Russians can in some way influence the Lukashenko regime and help to democratise the country. What do you think: to what extent are such hopes grounded, or are them illusions?

- **G. Ya.** These are illusions. The present regime of Belarus is the regime that Russia wants to see there. That is all. If it wanted to see another regime, this other regime would have been in place long ago.

Why then does Europe persistently repeat this thesis about the Russian factor from one resolution to another?

- **G. Ya.** Simply, because it does not know what to do. Because, this is a really complicated topic.

What should be done, in your opinion? It is too obvious that opposition forces are not sufficient. The country has a relative economic stability (another question is: what are the roles played by Russian subsidies). In any way, the society is sleeping today...

- **G. Ya.** These problems must be solved, to a significant degree, in Moscow. For example, I do whatever I can to help Belarus in this context. In general, any positive changes in Moscow will immediately lead to positive changes in Belarus. The fate of Belarus significantly depends on what will happen to Russia. I personally do not like to see Belarus as a battlefield between Europe and Russia.

What is your short-term prediction: will the Kremlin undoubtedly support Lukashenko during the 2006 elections?

- **G. Ya.** I do not know. The Kremlin will solve its own task: to retain Belarus within its sphere of influence. If Lukashenko is needed for this, he will remain. But if the issue can be solved without Lukashenko, the Kremlin will be happy to do without him. They will be purely pragmatic in their approach.

Also in the European Parliament in Brussels, a dialogue was held with the Chair of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Rene van der Linden. «In my opinion, Russia has to play an important role to turn Belarusian towards Europe», he stated. He also added that he was not a champion of the total isolation of Belarus.

The author of this message asked: Is it possible to believe in the Kremlin ability to help democratisation in Belarus, when many speak about the rapprochement between Putin and Lukashenko regimes? It turned out that the Chairman of the PACE did not quite agree with this. He agreed that Moscow has problems with freedom of mass media, human rights, etc. However, Mr. Van der Linden reminded that when last June the Council of Europe discussed the report on the progress of Moscow commitments before this organisation, members of the Russian delegation accepted many critical remarks in a constructive way.

Unfortunately, our interlocutor was pressed for time and I did not have time to remind that at the same, during the session in Strasbourg, the head of the Russian delegation and the Chair of the Duma Committee on International Affairs Konstantin Kosachev stated that his country planned to reduce its fee to the PACE budget. Though he asked not to correlate this with the strict formulations in the above report, it could not be thought accidental. Mr. Kosachev even did not try to conceal his indignation at the fact that PACE recommended Moscow to build its relations with Minsk depending on the democratic reforms in Belarus. He stated this immediately in Strasbourg, and then in Moscow, some days later. «We think absolutely improper the recommendation for Moscow how to build its relations with a third country which is not a member of the Council of Europe and has not any commitments to it. This recommendation is a colossal political blunder of the PACE». That's how the «Interfax» agency cited the statement of Kosachev at the press conference in the Russian capital on 27 June.

It is noteworthy that the fact that Belarus, due to violations of human rights, has remained the only country in Europe which is not a member of the Council of Europe is presented almost as valour! Perhaps, neither Strasbourg nor Brussels read the reports about this press conference? Or they did not hear a series of statements by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs defending the official Minsk? Anyway, even following this happening, resolutions of

the European Parliament persistently reproduce the thesis about the need «to raise the issue of Belarus at the negotiations with Russian authorities».

«There are two models for replacement a regime: conventionally speaking they are American and European models. Naturally, I am a champion of the European model». That was the answer to my question in Brussels by Graham Watson, leader of the third most important factions in the European Parliament «Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe». The issue is, whether the united Europe has any real levers to influence the Belarusian situation. (This conversation, just as a series of others, took place during the visit of Belarusian journalists to the European Parliament on the invitation of the Vice Speaker Janusz Onyszkewicz and the group «Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe».)

«We are amazed that countries which had some degree of welfare in the time of the Soviet Union are now rolling towards dictatorship», stated Mr. Watson. He also added: «We welcome the fact that the Belarusian opposition has joined its forced and elected a single candidate». As the leader of the group put it, now Europeans «understand better what is happening in Belarus». Graham Watson also stated that «concern about the Belarusian situation in Europe is increasing». «In my understanding, Belarus is part of Europe», stressed the member of the Parliament. At the same time, he agreed with the opinion that not everyone in the European Union feels it. «Most of the people in our countries are concerned with their own problems», noted the interlocutor. He acknowledged that statements of the European Parliament are rather declarative in their character. However, this British deputy added that, «We, in the European Parliament, are trying to push on other institutions of the European Union». According to Mr. Watson, the Council of the European Union pays more attention to elaboration of a common external policy and security policy. The head of the group hopes that fruits of the coordinated and strong policy of the European Union towards Belarus can be seen soon. Mr. Watson added that no forced measures are meant: «We are not going to send troops to change the regime in Belarus». The interlocutor noted that the EU can influence the situation in Belarus by using «three tools», i.e., economic impact, diplomacy, and support of democratic forces in the country.

It should be also pointed out that representatives of the «Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe» are in favour of a more active approach by the European institutions to the issue of democratic reformatations in Belarus. In particular, members of the group promote the project of the independent radio broadcast for Belarus. On 1 July 2005, the head of the group Graham Watson and the Vice Speaker of the European Parliament Janusz Onyszkewicz (also a member of the same faction) visited Minsk so as to study the situation in the country and establish contacts with Belarusian politicians. In particular, these European deputies had a meeting with Aleksandr Milinkevich, who was later elected as a single candidate from the democratic forces for the 2006 presidential elections.

In his turn, Janusz Onyszkewicz, answering in Brussels to my question about whether the united Europe sees any effective tools for influencing the Belarusian situation, assured that deputies of the European Parliament would, in the future, continue their pressure on the European Commission so as to help democratisation in Belarus. The interlocutor acknowledged that opportunities of the European Union in terms of influencing this country are rather limited,

although it has financial resources to support reformation processes in different states. According to this politician, the problem is that the Belarusian leaders do not show readiness to really develop relations with the united Europe. On the other hand, as Mr. Onyszkewicz noted, there is also a problem of inertia of European institutions. This prevents them from elaborating a more flexible policy towards Belarus. «The bureaucratic machine of the European Commission is very slow and inert, however, we will move faster little by little», summed up the interlocutor.

The author of this article could not but ask the following equation: Do you believe that Moscow can help in democratizing Belarus? Janusz Onyszkewicz answered that regimes of Putin and Lukashenko do come closer to each other. According to the Vice Speaker of the European Parliament, the Kremlin supports the current authorities in Minsk because, following its defeat in Ukraine, «it cannot afford a similar scenario in Belarus». At the same time, according to this politician, «in a certain situation it may become not beneficial for Moscow to have such a partner, isolated from the entire world»; then, it may put its stake on another leader. In this context, the Vice Speaker recalled a well-known story, whether an anecdote or a true one, that when Stalin was irritated by Krupskaya, he warned her that it was possible to find another wife of Lenin...

Mr. Onyszkewicz is convinced that the united Europe must help in the development of civil society and political pluralism in Belarus. In his opinion, to avoid the «Romanian scenario» in the country, it is necessary to try to change mentality of those who are at power. «They managed to do this in Poland, and there was roundtable instead of a revolution», indicated Mr. Onyszkewicz, keeping in mind the negotiations between the government of Jaruzelski and the opposition, organised in 1989, which were the beginning of the democratic transformation of the Polish society.

Janusz Onyszkewicz is a veteran of the legendary «Solidarity», a former political prisoner, and he knows what he is speaking about. He recollected an episode from his own biography: it was 1983, martial law in Poland and the peak of repressions. He was professor of mathematics and a member of the opposition, in handcuffs. And then, all of sudden, a security officer said to him in private, that they, who were meant to prosecute and suppress, were talking in low voices among themselves about what would the then prisoners do to them when they came to power. According to the member of European Parliament, members of the state machine must feel that today's authorities are not for ever. To this end, champions of public changes should show their force and unity. Therefore, the Vice Speaker of the European Parliament stressed that «it is a pleasure to know that the opposition has its single candidate for the presidential elections».

The recent return to Minsk of the Polish Ambassador Tadeusz Pauliak was assessed by his compatriot Mr. Onyszkewicz as a normal and logical step. We should remind that the ambassador was recalled to Warsaw in July last year, at the peak of the diplomatic crisis, related to the attack by the Belarusian authorities at the «too independent» leaders of the Union of Poles in Belarus. The return of Mr. Pauliak was considered by a number of politicians and political scientists as a manifestation of the lack of consistency and the weakness of Poland's policy in the Belarusian direction. Mr. Onyszkewicz does not fully agree with this assessment.

He stressed that his country did not declare a diplomatic war on Belarus, but only recalled the head of its mission for consultations. According to Mr. Onyszkewicz, now, following the consultations, the Polish ambassador had a broad field of activities. At the same time, he did not think that the recent meeting between the Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas and his Belarusian counterpart Sergey Sidorsky was a well-thought step on the part of Vilnius.

It should be added in this respect, that Kiev's statements about its readiness to export to Belarus the fruits of its orange revolution started to subside. Recently, the new Ukrainian Prime Minister Eranukhov visited Minsk; a meeting between Lukashenko and Yushchenko cannot be ruled out in the foreseeable future. The Ukrainian leadership obviously is not willing to spoil rapidly developing trade and economic relations with its northern neighbour. Or, to aggravate the internal political situation after the split in the «orange» team on the eve of parliamentary elections that will be difficult for Yushchenko and his colleagues.

These pragmatic approaches have brought about some disenchantment among the Belarusian champions of democracy, who were earlier inspired by the «orange revolution». In general, analysing unexpected curtsseys of the neighbours to the official Minsk, some Belarusian political scientists, for example, make a conclusion that the Lukashenko regime has more chances to successfully oppose the pressure both from the West and from the East. Yes, there is some pressure from Russia, too. But what is this?

It is indicative that the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Lavrov, speaking in Paris on 11 October, supported the official Minsk and called on the West to avoid black-and-white assessments of the situation in Belarus. In the past, too, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has several times spoken against «export of democracy» to the post-Soviet states. It is obvious that Moscow gives the West a new clear message: Do not touch the country which is within our sphere of influence! Now the ball is in field of the West.

Aleksandr Klaskovsky. Brussels–Minsk. 24.10.05.

VACLOV STANKEVIČ: A BROAD AND PEACEFUL FRONT IS NEEDED FOR BELARUS' DEMOCRATIZATION

Interview with the member of the Lithuanian Parliamentary Commission on NATO

Politicians and analysts continue to comment on the statement made by the Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus to the German newspaper «Welt» about possible attack by Lukashenko troops on his country. Mr. Stankevič, you have expressed in press the opinion that the journalist is rather misinterpreted the idea of the President. Nevertheless, there is no smoke without fire... Possibly, Lithuanian leadership sees some grounds for concern about security of their country related to the policy of the Belarusian regime?

- V. S. I am very closely related to the issue of the national security, because I am the head of the Parliamentary Commission on NATO. In no way do we perceive Belarus as a po-

tential enemy. In no way! I think that the President Adamkus, if you ask him now, would not confirm the opinion about Belarus as a potential threat to Lithuania. On the other hand, we have political views on the global processes that are different from the views of the Belarusian leaders. Perhaps, when Mr. Adamkus gave his interview, he meant, first of all, the style of government in Belarus. This country is governed, putting it mildly, not always according to the laws. Many decisions are taken through presidential decrees.

That is to say, a feeling of threat can appear among the neighbours because of unpredictable behaviour of the official Minsk, cannot it?

- V. S. Indeed, one thing is when a country is ruled by democracy, with a democratic parliament and deputies vested with due powers, like, say, in Lithuania. Then, the policy of the country is predictable. And it is quite different when everything, or almost everything, depends on the will of one person. Then, of course, there is a moment of unpredictability. But I want to stress once again: this does not mean that we, in Vilnius, see Belarus as a country that can attack us tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or in a month. Belarus is a very important economic partner for us. I say this not as a witticism — this is really so. For Lithuania, a country which is three times smaller than Belarus, its market, cargos coming through our territory, have a high significance. And from this point of view, it is not wise to view Belarus as an enemy.

Another argument is, to attack Lithuania, or, say, Latvia today means to attack NATO. I think Belarusian authorities also understand this. By the way, working in NATO entities, I know very well: they think Belarus also as a very important partner. Again, this is not merely a compliment — it is really so. In Brussels, they have an opinion that Minsk plays a worthy part in the programme «Partnership for Peace». In the last three years, I have regularly attended NATO summits and can argue that Belarus has a good reputation in terms of cooperation. Let us see the following: if a country is praised by the NATO entities for cooperation within the programme which has such a clear name as «Partnership for Peace», then what kind of war can we talk about?

You have noted that economic cooperation with Belarus, including transit, etc., is very important. In this relation, I recollect a recent meeting of your Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas with his Minsk counterpart Sergey Sidorsky. It had ambiguous repercussions, in particular, among EU politicians. Don't you think that sometimes members of the European Union, due to economic considerations, somewhat put aside democratic principles, closing their eyes on violations of human rights, and build relations with Minsk based on the pragmatic interests?

- V. S. I would not agree that someone closes his eyes. On one hand, Belarusian transit is really very important — and not only this. For example, we have many joint ventures. Economic cooperation is facilitated by the fact that, virtually, we do not have a language barrier. In general, we understand each other well, because we have come from the same system and have similar mentality.

However, we never close our eyes on the violations of democracy which really take place in Belarus. And if you ask today about this our Prime Minister Brazauskas, he would, for sure, give the same answer. Lithuania will inevitably speak about violations of democracy. And it speaks about it today — though Minsk does not always like it. You know that we orga-

nize seminars and conferences on the Belarusian issue. We do not conceal this fact. We speak openly that we support opponents of the regime ruling in this country.

At the same time, we think that the stronger the Belarusian businesses as well as the Belarusian economy integration into the economies of democratic countries are, the sooner the process of democratization in this country begins. But if we begin to turn away from each other in such fields as economy and culture, then we will move farther apart from one another. But we have to come closer. And for this reason, we should develop economic ties in every possible way. Therefore, if the Prime Minister Brazauskas meets with his Belarusian counterpart, this is quite normal. In the long run — and I always emphasize this — there is a difference between the President Administration and the Government of Belarus. Ministers are more economically-biased than politicians.

In general, I am among those people in Vilnius who think that our governments must cooperate, to put it simply, to the full extent. I am sure that this will help to begin the process of democratisation in Belarus in a much faster way.

You mentioned seminars organised in Lithuania on the Belarusian issue and the support to political opponents of Lukashenko. Recently, this issue was raised by General Dementei from the Belarusian KGB, presenting a bill on counteracting extremism in the Parliament. According to his words, some support bases to exert impact on Belarus are being formed in the neighbouring countries, including Lithuania. In this context, tracking and possible training of extremist groups was mentioned. How can you comment on this statement?

- V. S. I categorically disagree with him. I repeat: we do not conceal the fact when we organize activities involving Belarusian opposition. For example, recently, there was a seminar under the auspices of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. If we see that the Belarusian opposition is deprived of the possibility to present their opinion publicly in their own country, that nongovernmental newspapers are closed and there are no independent TV channels like in Lithuania, then we think it our duty to give these people an opportunity for free statement of their views about the future of Belarus. However, everything is done in a legal way! We do not urge people to start riots or to come to the streets. It is even more improper to speak about some plans of intervention on our part. We have our own problems! The fact that we do not always find a common language at the political level with the official Minsk does not mean that they prepare some revolution for Belarus in Vilnius. We have no any thoughts about this!

OK, let us put aside revolutionary scenarios. Then, the issue of effective influence by Europe and its institutions on the Belarusian situation comes up. For example, the European Parliament adopts relevant resolutions. They include a lot of correct items; however, the ideas and proposals often are stuck at the level of executive authorities of the European Union. In the European Commission, for example, they say: we have no leverage or tools to implement these plans. Or else: the rules do not allow sending money for some programmes of democratization. How, in your opinion, can this declarative approach in the approach of Europe to the Belarusian issue be overcome?

- V. S. I agree that there is little benefit of declarations and resolutions. In the recent years, they have not brought any tangible benefits. The problem is that in Belarus the traditional scheme of the opposition coming to power through elections does not operate. Unfor-

tunately, the election legislation is far from European standards. The same concerns the law on press. The opposition publications are closed, and, as a result, the press controlled by the authorities is dominant. Thus, the Belarusian opposition is unable, for objective reasons, to do what the opposition in any normal democratic country should do. Namely, to explain to its people how it sees the future of the country so as to win over the majority of the electorates and win the elections. Therefore, I think that we should help the Belarusian opposition in the future. We also should do, so to say, some of its work (not because the opposition is so incapable, but because its conditions are unbelievably severe). That is, we must have as broad as possible contacts with the rank and file Belarusian citizens, explaining them the advantages of a democratic way.

Thus, we need not only resolutions and seminars for the opposition leaders — we need contacts with ordinary Belarusian people. It should be done through activities of nongovernmental organizations, scientific cooperation, art performances, youth exchanges, etc. In general, to facilitate democratization of Belarus, we need a broad front — a front in a good and peaceful meaning of this word. We should remember that Belarus is our neighbour. And we should not run at breakneck speed to the West, thereby increasing the abyss between our countries. We need everyday and laborious work for the sake of changes in this country, by communicating with broad sectors of population, but not only with the political opposition.

Following the scandal with the Union of Poles in Belarus, analysts started to say that Warsaw got its fingers burnt trying to build some special, more advanced relations with Minsk based on the principles of good neighbourhood. Now they make a conclusion: you will not mitigate the Belarusian regime with a carrot. On the other hand, a whip will not scare it, too. How should Europe behave — in a stricter or softer manner — in its relations with Belarusian authorities?

- V. S. I would put it in this way: I would like to see Belarus a free and independent state, rather than some unit making part of Russia. I am afraid that, if we rely on the policy of a whip, we will push Belarus closer to its big eastern neighbour. Therefore, I support the idea of tolerance and cooperation with Belarus at different levels.

According to the «Welt», the Lithuanian President criticized Brussels for its inefficient policy towards Belarus and suggested elaborating a clearer line. What do you think the President meant?

- V. S. I have repeatedly communicated with the President Adamkus on the issues of foreign policy and I know that he sees very well that resolutions alone, or statements on behalf of the EU entities, are far from being enough. Statements usually are made to some events, for example, when they close one more newspaper or put into prison another politician. However, the united Europe does not have a system for everyday and consistent work on the Belarusian topics. We need to address the issues of Belarus not from time to time, but every day. We need to develop in every way contacts with its people. We should not call for revolutions, but convince, step by step, broad walks of Belarusian society in the advantages offered by democracy.

Questions were asked by Aleksandr Klaskovsky. 07.11.05.

JUSTAS PALECKIS: «EUROPE SHOULD USE EVERY CHANCE TO BUILD A DIALOGUE WITH MINSK»

An exclusive interview of the deputy, member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament

By the results of a recent session of the ministers of foreign affairs of the EU, Brussels threatened the official Minsk with sanctions if the 2006 presidential elections are not just and democratic. The proposed sanctions include enlarging the list of the regime officials who will be rejected visas, as well as freezing of bank accounts of the Belarusian leadership. However, Belarusian officials hardly ever visit the West at all. Besides, they are not so naïve so as to keep money within the reach of Brussels. Then, how effective will these hypothetical sanctions be?

- J. P. I think that enlarging the list of the regime officials who are banned to visit Western countries would have, rather, a tangible moral impact. This would emphasise that Belarus in the modern Europe looks like «a white crow» because of its leadership. Moreover, the country is not represented, for example, in the Council of Europe. As regards freezing of the bank accounts, then, probably, this sanction could affect interests of some Belarusian officials. As far as I know, the general trend is that they prefer to keep money in more stable and financially reliable places, i.e., conventionally speaking, not in the East, but in the West.

But probably, these sanctions will be too late following the election campaign in Belarus, won't they? Independent experts are stating unanimously that you should not expect just elections in this country. Approaching the election day, the authorities are methodically «protecting» the public and political field against a small group of opponents, including party entities, independent mass media and nongovernmental organization... After the elections, there may remain only a scorched earth, and the democratic Europe will have nobody to support. Then, perhaps, it is useful to «speed up» the issue of sanctions?

- J. P. We need to analyse the reaction of Minsk after this statement of Brussels. As far as I know, ministers of foreign affairs of the European Union were planning to return to this issue in January. Everything is not that simple. On one hand, the European Parliament is liberal with rigid assessments and radical proposals related to the Belarusian issue. On the other, it is always more difficult to act than to make declarations. The European Commission has a specific responsibility — which is not a small one.

The European Commissioner on foreign relations Benita Ferrero-Valdner has repeated spoken in this respect before our Committee on Foreign Affairs, as well as before the entire European Parliament. We always feel that the European Commission wants to give the Belarusian authorities some chance to correct their behaviour. In other words, it leaves an opportunity to take steps towards democratization and observance of human rights, as is expected by Europe. And if the Belarusian official leader is radiant with optimism and assuredness in the victorious outcome of the elections for him, then the following question is grounded: Why not to ensure the game according to the rules? Why should he resort to different restrictions for the

opponents, if he can win fairly? I think that Brussels has not yet abandoned this way of posing the question.

The problem of introduction of economic sanctions is even more delicate. As you known, this issue is under discussion in the institutions of the European Union. However, here Brussels will weigh up all «pros» and «contras» especially thoroughly. This is known to be a double-edged sword. Besides, it is important to preclude the following: we meant to hit the ruling top, but primarily the lower layers suffered.

What is your attitude to the initiative by the deputy of the Lithuanian Parliament Vaclov Stankevič, who thinks that Lithuania should initiate a dialogue with Belarusian leadership so as to push it towards democratization, in particular, of the laws on election and mass media? There is widely spread view among politicians and analysts that the Belarusian regime sees these jesters only as a sign of weakness of the opposite side.

- Vaclov Stankevič is a recognized expert in the Belarusian situation, both among the Lithuanian politicians and in Europe as a whole. I always listen very attentively to his opinions. I think that the proposals of the deputy Vaclov Stankevič deserve attention. Moreover that the approaches used before have not given any results.

However, the attempts to establish, conventionally speaking, more trustworthy relations with the official Minsk have also been a fiasco. For example, after the known story with the attack on the Belarusian Union of Poles you can hear that many politicians in Warsaw saying: we have been wrong trying to be kind with the Minsk regime, hoping to correct it little by little — it seems that dictatorship recognizes only one language, the language of force.

- **J. P.** Now, there are new political forces in power in Warsaw, and they can review a rather broad range of foreign policy lines. As regards Vilnius, I think that the concept, supported, in particular, by the deputy Vaclov Stankevič, has every right to exist and some chances for success. Let us recollect: at the time of cold war the West was speaking even to Stalin, let alone Khrushchev or Brezhnev. In this connection, we can point to the eastern policy of the German Chancellor Willie Brandt. He tried to have a duologue with GDR, Poland and the Soviet Union, appealing not only to high principles of human rights, but to elementary common sense as well. Were it not for this dialogue, if the idea of a total isolated prevailed, then Gorbachev would hardly have appeared. So, I think Europe should use every chance to establish with Minsk such a dialogue in terms of elementary common sense.

Speaking about the problem of support of Belarusian democrats and civic society: isn't Europe here a hostage of its excessive political correctness? Don't they take too close, in Brussels, to the mechanism of traditional procedures which require, in particular, that foreign aid projects be coordinated with the government? Critics say: look, Belarusian authorities have blocked in fact all channels of legal aid from outside and they play without any rules! Some European politicians have ideas about how to avoid such barriers. Thus, the Vice Speaker of the European Parliament Janusz Onyszkiewicz suggests creating in the EU institutions a more flexible mechanism, i.e., a fund for support of democracy. Perhaps, Western democracies and the European Union as a whole should be more flexible, given this Belarusian specific?

- **J. P.** Without going into details of such ideas, I would like to notice that the European Parliament has free hands for suggesting such ideas. However, the European Commission is

under the pressure of responsibility. They also, I presume, take into account the Russian factor. In principle, here we see a normal democratic system of checks and balances in action. The European Parliament pushes forward, while the European Commission to some extent keeps down these impulses and at the same time listens to the voices of free Parliamentarians. As a result, we often have the golden mean — a balanced way of solution. Thus, for example, the idea of development of independent radio broadcasting for Belarus was born precisely in the European Parliament. And after a while, following discussions, it was materialized in the decisions of the European Commission.

You mentioned the Russian factor. Indeed, Brussels regularly appeals to Moscow in the «Belarusian issue». But they receive no positive response. Recently, the Russian MIA have made another statement about disagreement with the EU attempts to present Belarus «as a sort of problematic area in terms of democracy». Don't you have an impression that appeal to Moscow asking to help in democratization in Belarus is nothing else, but «a voice of the one crying in the wilderness»? Or, they give homage to some ritual, given the fact that Belarus is within the tacit area of influence of Russia? Indeed, Russia is a strong player in this area; moreover, it pumps huge amounts of gas and oil to Europe. Therefore, in opinions of some Belarusian analysts, these pragmatic considerations take precedence in Brussels when they weigh up risks of aggravating conflicts with Moscow in relation to the Belarusian issue. Do you agree with this?

- J. P. Yes, of course. Russia stretches over Belarus its protective arm. And this is understandable, in a way. Firstly, Russia itself is criticised for violations of human rights. Secondly, Belarus is among its allies, which are not very numerous now. On the other hand, for Moscow it is not very reasonable to be interested in having a regime that compromises Moscow as its ally.

The European Commission, on the initiative of the European Parliament (also thanks to your personal efforts), is gradually developing projects of radio broadcast for Belarus. However, there are polemic spears broken around them, too. In particular, Belarusian nationalists castigate the «German Wave» for the organization of relevant programmes in Russian. However, the main issue of efficiency of broadcasting. It is considered of low quality, by technical and other reasons. At the same time, it looks as if Europe pays much less attention to Internet opportunities, as well as to support of independent press and independent journalists in Belarus itself. How do you perceive the role of the EU in the issue of freedom of speech for Belarusian people and giving them independent information?

- J. P. I think that radio broadcasting is a rather efficient way of information. I myself listen even now, for example, to the Russian service of «Radio Freedom» and find a lot of useful information. And the targeted broadcast for Belarus will be even more effective. As regards Internet, yes, you are right, we have to think along this line, to press on the European Commission to have relevant aid project elaborated. No doubt, aid should be given to independent mass media in Belarus itself. Moreover, that, being abroad, for example, in Germany, no journalist can tell about the situation and events in Belarus as convincingly as the person who lives in this country.

One known figure of the Lithuanian culture, who has visited Belarus, has shared with me the following observation: the current regime in Belarus reminds the regime in Lithuania before 1940. At that time, we had as the ruler Antanas Smetona who came to power as a result of a coup. He introduced censorship, a one-party system, and ruled the country without any parliament, but later he allowed electing a one-party parliament... In brief, there are many similarities. But if the system of power created by Smetona was not very much different from what we had in the pre-war realities in the Old World, then the current Belarusian regime, which, in many respects, is a rollback to the past, is, of course, an eyesore of the modern Europe.

At the same time, we should recognize that Belarusian authorities, as Smetona did many years ago, are very tricky in using the nostalgia of some part of population for paternalism and strong hand. By the way, such feelings can be seen in new countries of the European Union. Some people perceive democracy there as ineffective, and they wish to have someone, big and strong, to take care of their daily life.

However, for Lithuania and other EU countries, fortunately, the Rubicon has been crossed and the rollback to a dictatorship is impossible. In Belarus, the today system of power, with support of Moscow, demonstrates a reserve of vitality that is surprising even for many experts.

- J. P. Going back to historic similarities, I would like to emphasize: the force of authoritarianism is deceiving; such regime is a colossus with feet of clay. The Lithuanian President Smetona, though he concentrated in his hand huge powers, managed to have, in fact, everyone against him during his 14 years of rule. Therefore, in 1940, it was rather easy for Moscow to create in Lithuania a vision of all-round support for the Soviet power. Putting it differently, authoritarianism turned out to be detrimental for the Lithuanian independence.

The official Minsk always tells the West: do not teach how to live; we have invented our own Belarusian model of development, and we go along our own way.

- J. P. I agree that there are no ready-made solutions. Probably, there may be unique ways for a worthy life of the people. But for me, there is no any doubt that the basic rules of the game must be observed. They are well-known. It is alternative democracy, human rights, freedom of press, etc. If Minsk started moving along this line, I think a positive mutual response of Europe would follow at once.

Questions were asked by Aleksandr Klaskovsky. 28.11.05.

THE EUROPEAN UNION FACES A NEW CHALLENGE IN THE «BELARUSIAN ISSUE»

Champions of a flexible dialogue with Minsk are under a shower of criticism

The united Europe has long been trying to find approaches to the so-called «Belarusian issue». The regime of Aleksandr Lukashenko is obviously falling out of the standards culti-

vated by the European Union in the field of democracy and human rights. Attempts to push the country leadership towards mitigating the domestic political situation have not brought any visible results. At the same time, the official Minsk demonstrates a surprising indifference towards threats and temptations, equally. Figuratively speaking, the ruling top is not impressed by a whip or a carrot from the West.

What should be done? The most indicative in this respect are the discussions held in Vilnius, the capital of one of the new EU states, located literally 2 hours drive from Minsk, the bastion of the «last dictatorship in Europe», as it is described by the irreconcilable opponents of Lukashenko. Last autumn, in Lithuania, we could hear rather loud voices of politicians who suggested a more flexible approach to contacts with the Belarusian leadership.

We should remind here the following: the European Union, which has very serious claims to the official Minsk, some time ago proclaimed the «policy of restricted contacts» with the Lukashenko regime. In particular, the EU country leaders were not recommended to have meetings with top officials from Belarus. The consequences of such approach are very well felt by the President Aleksandr Lukashenko, who has not been invited, for many years, for official visits to the states of the united Europe. However, these restrictions are known not to have pushed the Belarusian leadership to mitigate the realities of the regime, whose authoritarian character is recognised by the head of the state himself.

Champions of a more flexible line in the «Belarusian issue» have the following logics: as long as the previous approaches have not given any results, we should try to find other ways to mitigate political ideas of the top rulers in Minsk. It is easy to understand that economic relations with Belarus are very important for Lithuania. In particular, transit of Belarusian cargo is a good source of income for its treasury. Lithuanians are not against the idea that the neighbouring country uses its territory for shipping potassium fertilisers to the port of Klaipėda. In general, pragmatic interests of Vilnius play not the least role in the above discussions. (We shall add in brackets that other EU countries are also active in developing trade with Belarus, though at the same time they criticise its political realities, which allows some opponents of Lukashenko to speak about «double-faced West», which, allegedly, «nourishes the dictatorship».)

Then, at the beginning of October, there was an event which caused an ambivalent response among European politicians. And it shocked the Belarusian opposition members. The Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas met with his Belarusian counterpart Sergey Sidorsky. As it was written in the Warsaw newspaper «Rzecz Pospolita», «during the inauguration of the Belarusian trade exhibition, which was decorated by a huge portrait of the smiling Aleksandr Lukashenko, the heads of the governments discussed in a good spirit plans for the future trade cooperation».

However, not everyone shared this indignation or irony. For example, the deputy of the Lithuanian parliament, an ethnic Belarusian Vaclov Stankevič, stated that «our governments must cooperate, simply speaking, to the full extent. I am sure that this will help to begin the process of democratisation in Belarus in a much faster way». Later, in early November, Stankevič, in a special statement, called on the politicians of his country to initiate a dialogue with Belarusian authorities so as to push them towards gradual mitigation of domestic politi-

cal realities. According to the deputy, first, it would be advisable to suggest that Minsk should democratize the elections legislation and the law on mass media. And this was not a single voice. For example, the Lithuanian member of the European Parliament Justas Paleckis in his interview «Wider Europe» also emphasized that Europe should use all possible chances to start with Minsk «a dialogue from the position of elementary common sense».

However, soon after that, the Belarusian authorities made some actions that looked as an open challenge to the West. In particular, it was an offensive against the remaining non-governmental press and adoption of strict amendments to the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedural Code. Now, a number of independent publications are deprived of the opportunity for being disseminated through the system of retail sales and subscription, which is, in fact, the monopoly of the State. The Criminal Code was supplemented by the article «Discrediting of the Republic of Belarus», which stipulates deprivation of freedom for criticism of the local reality.

Analysts made a conclusion that the ruling top understood, in its own way, the lessons of the «colour revolutions» and decided to preclude repetition of a similar scenario by preventive tightening of the nuts. And now, the supporters of the flexible dialogue with Minsk were under a fire of criticism. In particular, the Lithuanian deputy to the European Parliament Vitautas Landsbergis, in his interview to the radio «Freedom», stated that amendments to the Belarusian criminal law is «a return of Stalinism» and that «talks about any kind of dialogue with the official Belarusian authorities only encourage Lukashenko to take further steps to strengthen the dictatorship». Landsbergis suggested that now the European Union should take more rigid sanctions against Belarusian authorities.

Meanwhile, independent political scientists in Minsk share the opinion that neither Europe nor USA are ready for a serious game in the Belarusian political field. The European Union is concerned with its own problems of enlargement, while George Bush is stuck in Iraq. Besides, the observers stress that the Lukashenko regime is under protection of the Kremlin and the European capitals are not eager to start confrontations with it, given the dependence of the West on the supplies of Russian energy resources. They prefer, by inertia, to appeal to the Russian leadership, asking to help in the attempts to mitigate the Belarusian regime.

It is indicative that the very experienced diplomat Hans-Georg Wick (the former head of the Advisory OSCE group in Minsk), having put aside any diplomacy, called the idea of co-operation between the EU and Moscow in terms of Belarus democratization as foolishness. In the article published on 5 December in the Austrian newspaper «Press», the German politician strongly criticized the line of Brussels in the Belarusian issue. In particular, he criticized a declarative, rather than real, support of democratic forces in the country and the delusive hopes attached to the Kremlin.

Polish politicians also call on the European colleagues not to step on the same rakes, repeating old mistakes in their approaches to the Belarusian problems. Warsaw is known to become under a cold shower, trying to establish with Minsk some special neighbourhood relations — as it was with Vilnius. Suffice it to remind the much-featured story with the «taming» of the Union of Poles in Belarus, as well as a number of incidents when Polish politicians and journalists were not allowed to the country.

However, in Belarus itself, independent analysts hardly believe in that the EU will be able to use some range of effective measures against the official Minsk. According to experts' prognosis, the matter will be, rather, reduced to usual rhetoric, and, possible, some insignificant, rather symbolic, sanctions that are below the threshold of sensitivity of the local ruling top. Indeed, on one hand, the adoption by Minsk of «anti-revolutionary amendments» in the Criminal and Criminal Procedural Codes caused a quite predictable response from the West. Washington, Brussels and other democratic capitals were concerned and indignant; they made a disappointing diagnosis (the dictatorship is gaining strength) and called on the Belarusian authorities to rethink. On the other hand, the latter are hardly that much short-sighted so as not to have presumed indignation of the international democratic community after adjustment of the legislation in the Soviet style (in the time of the USSR, they put people into prison for «anti-Soviet propaganda and campaigning»). What is left is, to presume that the threatening rhetoric of foreign (as well as of domestic) champions of democracy does not scare Lukashenko very much.

The democratic community of Belarus is also openly disenchanted by the EU information project oriented to the local public. It is obvious now that the relevant programmes of «German Wave», aired from October last year, have not become an event for the local public. The programmes are very short and are difficult to tune using short-wave radio receivers (young people prefer FM radio). It is indicative that the discussion about the language used in the programmes has come to nothing (initially, nationalists were very indignant at the fact that the programmes were in Russian, i.e., the language of the «empire»). It has become clear that the new project has not, in fact, concerned the audience, and therefore, no need to break the spears. Local analysts started to say that Brussels has simply ticked the event. Putting in differently, it has formally reported to members of the European Parliament who, from time to time, adopt resolutions including items on expansion of independent information for Belarusians.

Meanwhile, the unexpected appointment of the presidential elections for March 2006 has made the Belarusian issue more relevant on the European agenda. According to some analysts, Aleksandr Lukashenko and his environment decided to pre-empt, being afraid that the West, in its strive to facilitate democratisation of Belarus, might use some new technologies that the regime could not fully resist. On the other hand, it is indicative that the elections in Belarus were appointed on the second day after the meeting between Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin in Sochi. The latter also confirmed the Russian readiness to supply gas to Belarus in the new year on the 2005 conditions. That is, at the price of 46.68 USD per thousand cubic metres. This is especially impressive at the background of the price at 220–230 dollars which was ostentatiously presented to the «orange» Ukraine. Such economic preferences given to the official Minsk on the eve of the election campaign cannot be interpreted but as an explicit support of the current Belarusian regime by the Kremlin. With all frictions between Putin and Lukashenko (which has been a secret of Punchinello since long), this regime is in the eyes of the Russian leaders a bastion for confrontation to «colour revolutions» in the area of geopolitical interests of Moscow. A very convincing is the version that Vladimir Putin is interested in the Belarusian elections being held before the G8 summit to take place in St. Petersburg next June. Otherwise, the Russian leader would, obviously, have a serious pressure from Western partners

in the Belarusian issue. But in this event, he can reply in the spirit of the Russian saying: «what is the use of brandishing fists after the fight». Due to this, the Belarusian analytical community raises the question: will the West be able to adequately respond to the transfer of the elections date and put the problem of democracy before the Kremlin in a proper way?

It is known that in November ministers of foreign affairs of the European Union made a statement in which they warned Minsk about possible troubles if steps are not taken to create conditions of just elections. In particular, what is meant is the enlargement of the «black list» of Belarusian officials who are banned to enter the European Union and freezing some bank accounts. The EU Council of Ministers promised to return to this issue in January. So, the Belarusian observers say that it will be possible soon to assess the degree of consistency in its actions. Another thing meant is organization of observation during the presidential elections in March, a clear assessment of the election campaign and conclusions of international democratic community in relation to future action strategies on the Belarusian issue.

In is clear that it is difficult to make significant shifts in the internal Belarusian political situation in a brief period. However, the international context of these elections will, for sure, determine a lot as regards the prospects for democratization of the country.

Ales Pramen. 22.12.05.

II. Issues of security and defence

STEPAN SUKHORENKO: «TODAY, THE THREAT COMES FROM ABROAD»

Interview with the Chairman of the Belarusian KGB

Additions and amendments in the Criminal Code and other legislative acts «on the issue of enhancement of liability for actions aimed against human beings and public security», presented by the Belarusian KGB Head General Stepan Sukhorenko to the Belarusian parliamentarians, caused a negative response by the global community. This new law is to go through two readings in the lower house and one in the upper house and, finally, should be signed by the Head of State.

How fast will the new document pass through all stages of the Belarusian law-making process?

- **S. S.** During the discussion of the bill, proposed on behalf of Aleksandr Lukashenko and coded in the parliamentary agenda as «urgent», one of the deputies began to reproach the security institutions for delay. He said that two years passed since the «rose revolution» in Georgia and one since the «orange revolution» in Ukraine. The deputy asked: «Why do we start to create the law domain so late in our country?» I answered him briefly: «I accept your reproach in full».

When will, in your opinion, follow the next demonstrations of the opposition?

- **S. S.** Possibly, you might have seen that before a storm it is always calm: to concentrate, to gain forces and get ready. Therefore, they are getting ready now, and getting ready seriously.

Can you give, at least tentatively, more specific time of expected events?

- **S. S.** I have already said in the Oval Hall (the place of sitting of the members of the lower house – V.G.) that such demonstrations are planned in the course of the presidential campaign and immediately after the election results are declared... A bill is a preventive measure. People who will go to the streets with explosives, combustion materials and metal bars will know what they are doing and what will be the consequences for them personally... This is not a minor hooliganism. This will be hooliganism with elements of terrorism which will entail respective criminal liability.

What will be the liability?

- S. S. So far, we propose to extend the term of imprisonment to seven years.

In your opinion, how serious is the threat of destabilization of the society by the Belarusian opposition?

- S. S. I want to note at once, that the Belarusian opposition by itself does not present any threat at all for the society, for destabilization of the society. Today, the threat, of course, comes from abroad. Financial, organizational, etc...

Can you give any specific addresses from where the threat comes?

- S. S. USA use resources and opportunities of international and foreign nongovernmental organizations so as to train special groups in Belarus, which they plan to use for organizing mass-scale street demonstrations. These are the American National Fund for support of democracy, the International Republican Institute, the Poland-based East-European Democratic Centre, the Stefan Batori Foundation, and the Polish-American Institute of Democracy in Eastern Europe.

Do you think that the proposed changes in the legislation can prevent massive demonstrations?

- S. S. We think that adoption of this law will help, in many respects, to put down the wave that is being prepared.

FOR INFORMATION – THE CONTENT OF THE ADDITIONS AND AMENDMENTS IN THE LEGISLATIVE ACTS:

Organization or leadership of a political party (other civil association, or a religious organization) whose activities are related to violence against people, or causing them bodily injurious, or other infringement upon rights, freedoms and legal interests of people, or to prevention them from execution of their state, public or family duties — shall be punishable with arrest up to 6 months, or deprivation of freedom up to 3 years.

Organization of activities or taking part in activities of organizations and foundations, in relation to which a decision on suspension of their activities or their liquidation has come into effect, shall be punishable with a fine or arrest up to six months, or deprivation of freedom up to two years.

Amnesty will be given to those who voluntarily terminate participation in such organization and declare about this to relevant state authorities. They will be relieved from criminal liability, if their actions do not include elements of another crime.

Arrest up to six months or deprivation of freedom up to three years can be applied for teaching or training of persons for taking part in massive riots, as well as for funding such actions. Arrest up to six months or deprivation of freedom up to two years are stipulated for teaching or training of persons for taking part in group actions that seriously violate public order, as well as for funding or other material support of such activities, if there are no elements of a more serious crime.

Liability is enhanced for public calls to take over state power or change violently the constitutional system — from six months of arrest to deprivation of freedom up to three years.

Calls to foreign states, to foreign or international organizations to commit actions detrimental to external security of Belarus, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as dis-

semination of materials containing such calls shall be punishable with arrest from six months to three years. If these calls are disseminated through mass media, the punishment increases and includes deprivation of freedom from two to five years.

The Criminal Code is also supplemented with a new article «Discrediting of the Republic of Belarus». It means *«giving to a foreign state, a foreign or international organization of knowingly false data about the political, social, military or international position of the Republic of Belarus, the legal status of citizens of the Republic of Belarus or its authorities»*. This stipulates arrest up to six months or deprivation of freedom up to two years.

Vladimir Glod. 01.12.05.

A DIRIGIBLE INSTEAD OF AN AWACS AIRPLANE

Work is under way in Belarus to build a multi-purpose surveillance and reconnaissance aerostat

According to the opinions in the Military Academy of Belarus, the Army must make more active use of aerostats and dirigibles. According to specialists, aerostats and dirigibles that were used some time ago actively in the Soviet Union have become outdated by the modern jet aircraft. The military specialists are sure that aerostats and dirigibles have been forgotten undeservingly and that now there are real opportunities for their revival. Today, science has reached the level when it is possible to equip even a simplest anchored aerostat with modern communications facilities, as well as software allowing precise surveillance and reconnaissance. The shell of the aircraft can be made very strong, nonflammable, light and cheap.

The aerostat in itself is a means for carrying any cargo to a specified elevation. It is suggested that location of five-six aerostats at the elevation of 3000–4000 metres with specialized onboard equipment will allow reliable radio, telephone and mobile communication across the entire territory of Belarus as well as 24-h surveillance over movement of on-land and air equipment.

It cannot be excluded that in the future aerostats can occupy the niche between the terrestrial radars and surveillance satellites. At the same time, they are dozens of times cheaper in production and operation than long-range radar airplanes.

Retranslation equipment installed onboard these aerostats can ensure reliable two-way communication with crews of helicopters and airplanes during their flights. An aerostat can be used to lift to the air an observer who corrects and sends to the artillery battery the shooting results. According to military experts, the Military Academy of Belarus carries research to create a multi-purpose surveillance aerostat through the joint Belarusian-Russian programme. In opinions of specialists, such dirigible can be invaluable for defence of the western borders of Belarus and become a serious supplement to equipment and machinery available for the air force and air defence teams.

As it was explained in the Military Academy of Belarus, that the scientific team of this educational institution is developing an information surveillance platform which, by its ca-

capacity, can replace five patrol airplanes as well as an airplane equipped with AWACS. It is planned to install on the information surveillance platform a three-coordinate radar station with a phased antenna grid, developed by one of the Belarusian enterprise of the military and industrial complex. As it was explained in the Ministry of Defence, this station, lifted by an aerostat to the required elevation, will be able to detect immovable and movable targets at distances «significantly exceeding the capacities of the terrestrial detection facilities».

Specialists are sure that the use of a flying command station A-50 (which is not available at the air forces and air defence teams) for getting early warning information about a massive attack from the air, including high-precision weaponry, will cost one order of magnitude higher.

Currently, the issue is coordinated with the Russian specialists on the creation of the aerostat shell. According to specialists: «It will be made from special synthetic materials that ensure not only strength, but also their low-visibility». Besides, Russian and Belarusian enterprises are working to create «special self-defence weaponry for an aircraft, i.e., station for radio electronic suppression of sighting devices of the striking air forces by means of laser SHF arms», stated military men. They also think that the aerostat is easy to use by border guards, as well.

Besides radar and surveillance operations, dirigibles can transport military equipment, arms and personnel. The designers say, that «Using the capacity for vertical landing and take-off from unspecialized sites, dirigibles can become an irreplaceable transport means».

Leonid Semenov. 05.12.05.

WAY TO EUROPE

The majority of illegal migrants consider Belarus as a transit state on the way of their illegal migration to countries of the European Union

The geographical position of Belarus also brings about a problem of illegal migration to this country. According to experts, the territory of Belarus is used to reach Western Europe. Foreigners use not only tourism channels, transit passage and business trips, but also seriously violate the rules of entry. According to information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the majority of migrants consider Belarus as a transit state on the way of their illegal migration to the countries of the European Union. Enhancement of the migration policy in Europe, funding of their expenses related to strengthening of the borders and organization of filtration areas leads to the situation when illegal migrants, who have failed to enter the countries they intended to reach, take attempts to settle in Belarus.

Now, the majority of illegal migrants coming to Belarus are from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, India, Sri-Lanka and China, who mainly use the transparency of the Russian-Belarusian border. Russia «supplies» up to 95% of these migrants. Migrants often enter the Russian Federation and other CIS countries legally. They also use rather liberal entry and visa conditions. Absence of customs and border control allows them to freely move to other states of the

Commonwealth of Independent States, including Belarus. According to official data, every year internal authorities of Belarus, together with border guards and KGB officers, detain over one hundred organized groups going to Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania and Latvia. In 2003, for example, they blocked the way to Europe for some 133 such groups (1925 persons). In 2004, to 126 groups (1044 persons). Later, they were deported under escort. During six months of 2005, 28 groups were detected (including 153 persons). Specialists argue that this problem will remain urgent in the future as well.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE GOING FROM BELARUS TO USA HAS INCREASED

As regards emigration of people from Belarus, then, currently, there is no mass-scale emigration from Belarus to foreign countries for permanent residence. These people emigrate mostly for reunification of families or trying to find employment. The major part of emigrants from Belarus goes to CIS countries. At the same time, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there has been some increase in the number of people moving for permanent residence to USA and Germany in the last three years. Thus, in 2000, 7.8% of all emigrants from Belarus went to USA, while in 2004 this figure was 8.5%. There has been a growth of emigrants to Germany, from 1.9% in 2000 to 9.8% in 2004.

THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE GOING FROM BELARUS TO ISRAEL HAS REDUCED

Of interest are statistical data related to the State of Israel where about 100 000 immigrants from Belarus live. Since Belarus proclaimed its independence 15 years ago, the number of persons going to Israel for permanent residence has reduced almost 20 times. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 1990, at the peak of emigration, about 98% of all emigrants from the country left for Israel for permanent residence. In 1995, about 45% of emigrants from Belarus went to Israel and in 2005 less than 5%. It should be noted that in 1990 over 135 000 people went from Belarus to other states for permanent residence, while in the recent years this figure has made from 10 000 to 14 000 people.

THE SOURCE OF SUPPLEMENTATION OF THE BELARUS POPULATION

As regards issues of immigration of foreigners to Belarus, according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in the last 5 years it has received mostly immigrants from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. From 1990 till 2000, about 627 000 persons arrived to Belarus from CIS countries. In 2001–2004, over 69 000 persons arrived from CIS and Baltic States. Belarusian authorities have begun to recognize that currently foreign migration is one of the sources of supplementation of Belarus population. For example, in 2000, it supplemented about 30% of the natural decrease. In 2003, the figure was 9.4% and in 2004 it was 4.1%. In the recent years, external labour migration has been developing. This is facilitated, primarily, by Belarus integration into the international labour market. Belarusian citizens go to other countries, while foreigners are involved in the labour market in Belarus. The account of migrant labour was begun in 1994. Compared to that year, today the scope of foreign labour migration has increased 5 times on the basis of agreements and contracts. Assessing the impact of foreign migration on

the development of Belarus, it should be noted that in case of non-return migration the country loses skilled staff as well as funds used for their training. However, in case of re-emigration people gain foreign experience; they are trained through effective programmes and then use their experience in their own country. Thus, specialists improve their skills. The financial status of families improves, and tension on the labour market reduces.

Noting the prospects of export of labour for Belarus, specialists state that this will help the country integrate into the international labour market and will facilitate the future growth of investments to the Belarusian economy. The number of labour emigrants from Belarus is permanently increasing, going up almost three times since 1996. Currently, people go from Belarus to more than 20 countries of the world. Before 2000, the majority of them went to Russia. The emigration to USA has increase in the recent time. For example, in 2002, the number of people who left for USA on the basis of contracts was 1547. Two years later, this number was 2026 persons. The relevant numbers of people going to Russia were 1147 and 916, respectively. Mostly labourers go to Russia, for a long term. Basically, people under 24 leave Belarus. As a rule, they are students who are overwhelmingly employed at jobs demanding physical labour. The most common type of activities for Belarusian students abroad is seasonal agricultural work. The second place is services and leisure activities. It is known that Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, Russia and USA have an increased demand for the so-called auxiliary staff, while in the construction sector, which has traditionally employed foreign labour, the rate of employment is dropping.

Analysis of labour migration processes in Belarus indicated that, according to official data, the greatest number arrived to Belarus in 1998, i.e., 2969 persons. Later, this number started to decrease: to 1252 in 2003, and about 500 in 2005. They basically include citizens coming from Ukraine, Russian, Turkey, Bulgaria, Germany, China and Poland, who were employed in agriculture, construction, woodworking, trade and public meals sectors. Last year, about 160 persons were employed in jobs demanding mostly intellectual labour; of them, 30 were managers, as a rule, of joint ventures and organizations with capital from their own countries. The Ministry of Internal Affairs records people coming to Belarus not only for work, but also as asylum seekers.

BELARUS IS ATTRACTIVE FOR REFUGEES

In early 1990's, the inflow of forced migrants from other countries to Belarus increased. This can be explained by transparent borders, the geopolitical situation of the country, and its political and social stability. Belarus has created an integrated and effective system of legal and social protection. Legislation on refugees is implemented successfully; it meets requirements of international standards. Belarus acceded to the UN Convention of 1951 relating to refugees and the Protocol of 1967. Therefore, the country can be attractive for foreigners. Over 2001–2004, about 600 foreigners arrived to Belarus asking for citizenship. As of 1 June 2005, 749 persons were recognized refugees, of which 278 persons were under legal age. Basically, they are from countries of Central and South-East Asia and Africa. The absolute majority among them are Afghans and Ethiopians. With financial support of the European Union, temporary

accommodation centres for illegal migrants are under construction near the airport Minsk-2 and near Brest.

Vadim Ignatenko. 12.01.06.

ALARMING PROSPECTS

Belarusian experts predict a growth of crimes related to corruption and an active development of shadow economy

Corruption-related crime is characterized by a high latency and will be on the rise in the near future. This opinion is presented by specialists from the Institute of Criminology and Criminal Science of the Ministry of Justice of Belarus. According to criminal law experts, the statistical data of the last 10–12 years about corruption-related crimes demonstrate that this type of crime has a positive dynamics. This gives grounds to presume that future increase of corruption-related crimes would represent a stable trend, and it will be in place, at least, in the coming years. In 1992, there were about 2,700 crimes of this kind in Belarus; in 2004, this number was over 6,800. According to experts, today, the most common among them bribes, abuse of authority or official position, misappropriation or embezzlement. Also, they indicate that corruption-related crimes are very latent now due to their hidden nature and the close character of entities where this crime prospers.

Speaking about the types of punishment adjudicated by Belarusian courts of law for these crimes, criminal law experts told that correctional labour is now the most common punishment, over 53%; though in 1992, less than 5% of suspects of corruption were sentenced for correctional labour. In the last two years, not more than 3% of suspects have been sentenced to pay fines, whereas in 1992 this type of punishment was used in relation to almost 32% of suspects. In 1992, not a single sentence included punishment for corruption-related crimes represented by deprivation of the right to hold specific positions, while in the last year about 10% of suspects had this ruling. In the last 10 years, more lenient punishment adjudicated by courts of law, compared to what is stipulated in the law, has been more common. This judicial practice, at least, indicated to inadequacy of sentencing for the above crimes as compared to the scale of corruption-related crimes. According to experts, such practice does not help prevent crimes or enhance law and order and legality.

At the background of corruption-related crimes as well as crimes in the field of economy and financial and credit sectors, there has been a boost of the shadow economy, by means of which criminal circles avoid paying taxes, legalize their incomes and use a significant part of incomes to pay off corrupt officials. This creates a vicious circle: the shadow economy nourishes the criminal circles, which, in their turn, create a good ground for corruption and economic crimes.

According to data obtained during interview with officers from law-enforcement, fiscal and judicial authorities, currently, corruption-related crimes are committed due to three main reasons: social and economic; moral; and related to underdeveloped criminal legislation. At

the same time, the surveys conducted among officers of criminal justice and control authorities indicated that ordinary human greed is often the main factor facilitating corruption in Belarus. People inclined to obtain or extort bribes associate their life ideals with financial concept of success and, when they take or demand bribes, they stem from the fact that power, money, public status and ostentatious luxury play the main role in their life.

According to interviews among officers of prosecution departments, state security and police officers, corruption is most widely spread among customs officers, tax inspections and administrative authorities of regions, towns and districts. The second dozen of the most corrupt institutions, according to law-enforcement officers, include banks, police, trade and communal service institutions, and health institutions. According to law-enforcement officers, the three least corrupt institutions include the National Assembly, state security bodies and social support institutions. Interview among law-enforcement authorities working in this field indicates that corrupt officers receive bribes mostly in foreign currency; the second in rank is gifts and other material values; the third in rank is free of charge performance of construction and repair work; and the fourth in rank is immovable property, like flats.

According to experts, corruption-related actions, like placing of children to prestigious educational institutions, employment of relatives, promotion, sending to long-term business trips abroad, have become less popular in Belarus in the recent years. Results of analysis of questionnaires among law-enforcement officers showed that information about corruption-related crimes is received by law-enforcement offices in the course of field surveys and inquiry and from field sources, as well as from individuals who contact law-enforcement authorities.

About 26% of law-enforcement officers who were enrolled into the interviews indicated that they themselves met with cases of pressure from state authorities and higher officials asking them to neglect their official duties in the interests of corrupt state officials. Over 6% of the respondents indicated that such pressure was exerted by the corrupt officials or by their relatives. Over 12% of the interviewed law-enforcement officers reported that they were in situations when they were pressed because of investigation into corruption cases and were offered bribes; 7% met with cases when they were pressed through persuasion, and 3% indicated to being faced with threats. In general, according to the majority of the respondents from the law-enforcement authorities, the fight against corruption in Belarus is not at a proper level.

FOR INFORMATION

Administrative burden on small and medium businesses in Belarus is among the heaviest in countries in transition. This conclusion was included into the survey «Business environment in Belarus» done by the International Financial Corporation (IFC), which also contained recommendations for the government of the country to develop small and medium businesses. The survey indicates that as of 1 January 2005, there were 32,800 small enterprises and 184,000 private entrepreneurs in Belarus. In 2004, the number of small enterprises went up by 6%, while the number of private entrepreneurs reduced by 1%. The total number of people employed by small and medium businesses is about 1 million, which makes 25% of economically active population of the country.

However, Belarus is significantly lagging behind in its indicators of development of small and medium businesses, compared to other countries. Thus, Belarus has 3 small businesses per 1,000 persons; in Russia this indicator is 6, and in Tajikistan 5. As a result, the share of products manufactured by small enterprises makes in Belarus 9%, compared to 36% in Uzbekistan, 50% in France, and 54% in Sweden.

According to experts of the IFC, qualitative and quantitative growth of small and medium businesses in Belarus is hindered by complicated administrative procedures and their high costs. During the survey among 1,200 Belarusian small enterprises and private entrepreneurs, organized in all regions of the country, the surveyors identified that the complexity of procedures is explained, primarily, by a great number of required documents, the protracted procedure and lack of clear interpretation of the requirements. This answer was given by 88% of the respondents from small and medium businesses. It was also identified that almost 70% of entrepreneurs think that personal relations and acquaintances are the best way to settle disputes with state authorities, and 64% of them indicated that unofficial payments are the best solution. According to experts of the IFC, in 2004, small and medium businesses spent, on the average, \$3,800 for registration, licensing and obtaining permits and certifications. In doing so, 17% of entrepreneurs indicated to forced unofficial payments during administrative procedures. The average amount of bribes was \$665.

Analyzing the conditions for registration of small businesses, the authors of the survey indicated that two-thirds of all small businesses registered in 2004 called this procedure complicated. On the average, the registration process takes three months, and to do this, it is necessary to visit, at least, 10 organizations and collect 13 packages of documents. 80% of the small and medium businesses indicated that registration expenses are very high, making on the average \$746. The high cost of registration is related to the fact that more than 80% of these expenses relate to notary certification of the documents.

Vadim Ignatenko. 09.02.06.

THE GREATEST FRIEND

Belarus is able, in some measure, to set off adverse implications of the ban on supplying the latest models of Western weapons developments to China

When making an official visit to China in early December of last year, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko had in advance announced the trip objectives through Belarusian and Chinese mass media. He declared that he intended to use the continuously growing potential of the People's Republic of China as an «accelerator» for imparting new dynamics to the national economy of Belarus. The Belarusian President reiterated the same thesis when summarizing the results of the Belarus-China summit in Beijing. To quote him, the major success of the visit can be clearly seen from over a dozen of signed interagency and intergovernmental

documents and by 20 negotiated contracts between economic agents of the two countries to the amount of USD 0.5 billion.

Belarus and China managed to expand the nomenclature of export deliveries. The objective is to increase mutual trade volume up to USD 2 billion. But it is most essential that Beijing confirmed its willingness to accommodate Minsk with cheap loans for implementing concrete projects in the field of telecommunications and high-end technologies. It is expected that the lending ceiling will be about USD 1 billion. As the Belarusian leader believes, «Some projects, which the Chinese side has asked to implement in Belarus, have no analogies in the world. China is willing to fund them and designates vast sums of money. Belarus will surely actualize these projects, since we have high-end technologies, science, and specialists. It is very important for us.»

In order to understand what kinds of projects are in question, it is apparently necessary to pay attention to Alexander Lukashenko's acknowledgement of China's good progress in the field of space exploration. But it is of most importance that China «hooked up» Belarusian enterprises and «hitched» them to develop space technologies. Thus, there appears a possibility to save Belarusian research schools. The degree of cooperation between the two countries in the space domain can be supported by the evidence of an unprecedented move of the Chinese authorities — allowing the Belarusian delegation, headed by President Lukashenko, access to a most important strategic site of China, the Academy for Space Technology. In a word, the Belarusian leader recapped that «in the history of our nation there has been no case of a visit paying such substantial dividends». However, with regard to how Beijing expects to profit from its rapprochement with Minsk, the interested party itself fails to provide an intelligible and clear answer.

BELARUS AND BEIJING'S PLANS

Answering this question instead of the rulers of the Heavenly Empire, some political analysts tend to see the reason behind the keen interest of gigantic China to Belarus, which is quite small in comparison to it, in the recently heightened full-fledged super power claims of the People's Republic of China. And, in the opinion of the Chinese government, this is impossible without their country attaining proper military might and creating modern military forces that can be deployed abroad. So far, solving of this problem is hindered by the remaining backwardness of the Heavenly Empire in the field of defense technologies compared to the most militarily advanced nations. The US impedes elimination of this gap in every possible way, prohibiting their allies to supply advanced weapons and break-through dual-use technologies to Beijing, as they are apprehensive of appearance of a real global competitor, though it may be in a long-term perspective. As for the near future, they are afraid of China's attempts to occupy Taiwan. Nevertheless, Ivan Medeiros, analyst of Washington D.C.-based RAND Corporation, believes that China managed to make two achievements in the field of military construction over a surprisingly short period of time. First, it concentrated its energy and resources to create an army within the army. Enormous monetary funds were allocated to create few high-technology military units as part of the former 2.2-million People's Liberation Army of China, which mainly consists of boot-wearing soldiers armed with rifles. The objective of these advanced

forces that make about 15% of the total PLA is to perform a time-urgent attack on weaker adversaries, using destructive missile saturation, which is supposed to paralyze the enemy, and modern naval and air forces coordinated by means of high-technology communications and tactical control systems. Virtually all Western experts are confident that these new advanced military forces are created with a view to attack Taiwan.

As of today, China has more intercontinental ballistic missiles than before, a great variety of ground- and air-launched cruise missiles, and about 400 Russian-made jet fighters SU-27 and SU-30, designed both for gaining the air supremacy and hitting surface and sea targets with precision weapons. Beijing seeks to change from importing finished models to importing and adapting most advanced military and dual-use technologies. Therefore, American analysts regard China's painful but successful steps toward creating a «defense industrial base,» i.e. its ability to produce modern weaponry, as «Achievement No. 2».

But, as James Mulvenon of the Center for Intelligence Research and Analysis believes, the genuine revolution made by the PLA in the field of communications and military administration media is what impresses most. To quote him, within the life-span of one generation, they took a step from rags to the world of wireless technologies. And they are not going to call it a day, attracting the latest foreign R&D achievements on an increasingly larger scale.

DEBATE IN THE WEST

However, the PLA is hindered faces particular difficulties in re-equipment process due to the ban on weapon and military technology deliveries to China, which was imposed after the cruel massacre of the protesters at Tiananmen Square in 1989. Over 15 years has passed since then, and for at least five of them there has been an on-going struggle in the West, intensifying and subsiding at intervals, for lifting the ban on supply of the latest armaments systems to China by NATO countries. At present, removal of this ban is opposed by rights advocates, who claim that China remains a repressive state, as well as by the Americans, who fear that the PLA gets hold of modern weapons through companies of states, possessing advanced military technologies, and may use them for attacking Taiwan. Removal of the ban is advocated primarily by representatives of the European military industrial complex. In their opinion, such receptive and solvent markets as that of China are vitally important for Europe, which needs to create a top-notch armaments industry independent of the US. As for retaining the embargo on supplying latest military technologies to China, it is basically impossible in the long-term outlook. Those not available in Russia, a power friendly to the Chinese, quite possibly can be sold to them by Israel, which is privy to all military secrets.

ASSISTANCE TO THE CHINESE COMRADES

In view of the above, the overt attempts of China's government to at least partially set off adverse implications of the ban on deliveries of the latest models of Western weapons developments by means of importing more or less advanced military and dual-purpose technologies from alternative sources appears quite reasonable. And, as suggested by evidence, Belarus by no means comes last in these designs.

In response to statements by non-believers, who claim that Belarus is hardly able to provide to China equal quality substitutes for European and Israeli high technology products (all the more so that Moscow has long and successfully been taking advantage of the US embargo on weapons exports to China), we would like to cite the interview of September 4, 2005 given by Piotr Rogozhevski, first deputy of the chair of the State Defense Industrial Committee of the RB, to Vo slavu Rodiny newspaper of the national Ministry of Defense. To quote him, the defense industrial complex of Belarus is ready to offer the following to potential partners: automated troop and weapons control systems; wire, fiber-optics, and radio communications systems for mobile and fixed automated control systems; aerospace optoelectronic equipment and photogrammetric facilities for receiving digital electronic Earth surface maps and navigation support of precision weapons; application suites for control of radar, laser-optic and information ballistic missile defense systems, missile warning stations, and space monitoring systems. It should be also noted here that military technology deliveries from the RB to China are in process and they did not commence as of yesterday. After the information publicized last year by General Chen Binde, head of the Ordnance Directorate of the PLA, Belarus and China had been successfully developing links in 126 lines of military technical cooperation over a period of almost 10 years. The completed contracts make a total of over USD 200 million.

However, our greatest friend's sphere of interest is by no means limited to present-day achievements of Belarus. The Chinese counterparts develop an increasingly stronger interest in break-through R&D areas of tomorrow. As it appears from a recent piece of information by Sinhua Information Agency, a national base for R&D cooperation between China and Belarus, Russia, Ukraine, and other countries of the former USSR was founded in the city of Chanchun in north-east Tziling province. It focuses on contacts in the fields of optoelectronics, materials science, biotechnologies, and other branches of research.

Some time earlier, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Belarusian State University and the Harbin Polytechnic Institute (HPI), pursuant to with the parties founded a Center for Scientific and Technological Cooperation for carrying out joint research and developing new technologies. To quote Zhao Zi, President of the HPI, cooperation with the BSU seeks to foster research at the Institute in such advanced areas as nano-technologies, laser technologies, etc.

Many analysts believe that the Chinese, who are famous for their pragmatism, are hardly interested in research for its own sake. Beijing needs its achievements primarily for creating dual-use and military technologies, including those in the field of space exploration and rocket production. And Belarus, which is eager to secure a footing in China and attract Chinese investments, is willing in return to sell military technologies to that country.

PEACEFUL «BELKA»

At that, it is by no means impossible for Belarus and Russia to share with their Chinese brothers the benefit of their joint project on creating space vehicles of «BelKA» type. Despite the fact that, following an inveterate Soviet tradition, the officially publicized functions of the BelKa satellite look absolutely peaceful, it is certainly a dual-use vehicle, in accordance with the same traditional practice.

It is expected that the satellite will be carried to the orbit from the Baikonur spaceport by means of the Dnepr launcher (converted version of the famous Satan missile) together with 5–6 other satellites, which will allow for significantly reducing the cost of the entire project. Experts believe that the BelKA satellite will be possibly furnished with Belarusian-made polyzonal MK-4 equipment, designed to take photos of the Earth's surface, as well as with a topographic camera TK-350, intended for receiving measuring photos from satellites used for drawing precise topographic maps and exploring the Earth's natural resources. During the satellite flight time, the camera provides photos of 25–30% of the total Earth's surface with the positioning error of 10 m.

According to the official version, the BelKA will be used mainly for receiving cartographical, geological, and environmental information. For instance, up to 30% of all the information received from the satellite will be used for map-making, 20–25% — in agriculture and forest management, 10–15% — in geology, 15% — for environmental research, and 10% — for monitoring urbanization processes. At first sight, such a ratio seems somewhat strange. Belarus is a small country and people have long traveled though its length and breadth. Why the so formidable need for cartographic information then? As a number of experts believe, the answer is quite simple: digital ground maps are used for directing precision weapons systems, for instance, cruise or aeroballistic missiles, to the target. As for receiving digital maps for missile guidance systems, they can be produced on the basis of aerial and space photos by the Automated Cartographic System for Creating, Upgrading, Storing, and Displaying Maps and Horizontal Plans in Digital and Graphic Form, created in Belarus. However, the list of high-end technologies, available in Belarus since the Soviet times, is by no means limited to the fore-quoted ones. It is another thing that official sources are in no hurry to publicize them.

Alexander Alesin. 13.02.06.

RUSSIA'S OUTPOST IN BELARUS

The space monitoring station, located in the territory of Belarus, may soon remain the only similar site situated outside of Russia

According to the statement by Sergey Ivanov, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Russia will gradually abandon the missile warning system radars, owned by the RF, which are currently stationed in the territory of the countries of the former USSR. Nevertheless, the command of the Gantsevichi-based radar station (Brest oblast) believe that operation of the site named «Baranovichi Node» will be continued for sufficiently long time.

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Belarus-RF government-to-government agreement on the operation in Belarus of the missile warning system radar was signed in 1995 for the period of 25 years. In return for the operation of the radar, the armed forces of Belarus are entitled to conduct air defense exercises with operational missile launches at Russian training ranges. Pursuant to the same agree-

ment, «the Gantsevichi-based military site of «Baranovichi Node» does not have a military base status and the number of military personnel at this site may not exceed 1,200 persons». The area of responsibility of the radar encompasses Germany, France, and Great Britain. The site of «Baranovichi» is served exclusively by the RF Military personnel, 250 of them being regular soldiers.

Specialists note that the Gantsevichi-based radar, commissioned after the collapse of the Soviet Union, is the only Russian facility of the type, using fully digital signal processing. After the decommissioning of the Skrunde-based tracking facility (Latvia), the Baranovichi Node covered practically all of its area of responsibility. The military also declared that they were prepared to partially offset a possible loss of the radar in Mukachevo (Ukraine) by means of their capacities. At that, they regard the Mukachevo-based radar as a practically lost one, as this facility is manned exclusively by Ukrainian crews and all that Russia receives from this site is information on the outer space environment. According to the information received from an unaccredited source, the Mukachevo-based facility is frequented by NATO specialists, in particular, by the US military personnel.

When recently inspecting one of such facilities in Lekhtusi (Leningrad oblast), Sergey Ivanov, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, announced that sooner or later, as new highly compatible radar systems are created in the RF territory, Moscow will abandon the facilities that had been established under the Soviets and are currently situated in the territory of the New Independent States. At that, he noted that the priority strategic orientation is southbound. To quote the Deputy Prime Minister, creation of the prototype model of the highly compatible radar system in Lekhtusi cost RUR 2 billion, and their cost upon the full production start-up will not exceed 1.5 mln. roubles. It used to take 5-9 years to construct similar facilities of the previous generation, while now it takes 1.5 years. Commissioning of new VHF and UHF radars in the north and south of Russia allows more time for warning of all missile launches, including short-range, combat, and cruise missiles along with intercontinental ballistic ones.

IMPORTANT NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUE

While in the north the hazard of short-range and cruise missile attacks is highly unlikely, it is quite probable in the south. Commissioning of a new radar in the south of Russia will allow for eliminating dependency on the information arriving from the missile warning system facilities stationed in Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Three RF radars are currently located in the territory of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Belarus, along with two facilities in Ukraine.

RUSSIA WILL NOT ABANDON THE BELARUSIAN «VILEIKA»

In addition to the site of «Baranovichi», Belarus accommodates the radar facility of «Vileika» of the RR Navy. It is used for transmitting information for the Central Command of the Armed Forces of the RF and the Central Command of the Navy. In particular, the facility carries out reception of messages from submarines. The capabilities of the facility allow for receiving radio signals from a submarine, which is in the Atlantic Ocean at a depth of 200 meters and from a submarine in the Pacific Ocean 20 meters under the sea. Rear-Admiral Nikolai

Fetisov, head of the Central Radio Communications Center of the RF Navy, announced that in the near future Russia would not abandon the Belarus-based broadcasting facility of «Vileika.» He explained that more advanced radio communication techniques do not allow for fulfilling the missions that the Vileika-based facility is tasked with and noted that the broadcasting facility operates in a frequency band, which satellites fail to handle. This is a very low-frequency band (VLF) with the wave length of several kilometer.

The capacity of the broadcasting facility is 1 kWt and its communication range is up to 10 thousand km. The maintenance area of the military unit, accommodating the facility, is over 600 hectares. About 900 tons of antenna curtains is fastened to posts up to 320 meters high. The site commander reported that the facility would be upgraded within 3–4 years. It will be converted to a new element base, which is to enhance its capacity and reliability and reduce power consumption.

Leonid Semionov. 16.02.06.

III. Regional context

MOST IMPORTANT VECTORS OF BELARUS' POLITICS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED

The Belarusian parliament refused to mark down Russian as a strategic partner of their country

Only 14 deputies voted for the proposal to make a corresponding entry into the law «On Approving the Fundamental Lines of Domestic and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus», which was adopted on 5th October by the lower chamber of the National Assembly in the second (last) reading. 87 deputies opposed the proposal. The Chamber has 110 parliamentarians altogether.

When approving the wording of the new legislative act clause-by-clause, some deputies proposed to complement the clause on the fundamental objectives of Belarus' foreign policy with the following statement: «Development of strategic partnership with the Russian Federation pursuant to the Treaty on the Formation of a Union State of 8th December 1999.» Taking the floor to validate the proposal, Ms. Abramova, who is considered chief representative of Russia's Yabloko Party in Belarus, provided the following justification for the initiative:

«We believe that strategic partnership between Belarus and Russia is not a variable; it is a constant, a baseline value. And this is not only because we have a union treaty with Russia and do not have any with other foreign states. This should be anchored in the fundamental objectives for a single reason that Russia is our leading economic partner with a receptive market for our goods, as can be seen from the sales dynamics over the many years of this country's independence. And this is not only because the RF side always supports Belarus in foreign policy directions. I would like to remind you, dear colleagues, of the speech made by President of Belarus at the 60th session of the UN General Assembly. The political meaning, as they say now, of the Belarusian President's message to the international community lay in an appeal to respect a people's right to choose its own way of development. The political meaning for a single particular addressee was quite concrete — President of Belarus actually stated that what had happened to Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq could not and should not happen to Belarus under any circumstances. There are at least three reasons to this: first, in Belarus there are no

formal causes for external intervention in a concentrated form, as this country does not have internal conflicts on inter-ethnic or inter-denominational grounds; second, no one can create in this country an externally driven conflict that could provide such a cause. And, third, we are in union with Russia — a great friendly nation.» The deputy said, «I would like to add a personal comment that it is the latter that almost entirely rules out the scenario of Yugoslavia or other variant of any foreign intervention. Even if someone already does not like the future actual results of the presidential election of 2006 at the forecast level. I am asking for your support of the amendment.»

But this appeal did not inspire Olga Abramova's fellow parliamentarians. Anatoli Krautski, deputy chair of the parliamentary committee for international affairs and liaisons with the New Independent States, who was presenting the draft law, opposed these arguments with some of his own:

«First, the level of the policy law does not imply such concrete definitions, which is indicated by the generalized wording of its provisions. Otherwise, such a fundamental principle of a regulatory legal act as stability will be violated. Second, the peculiarities of relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation are well-known and have their political, economic, and legal basis, which is significantly broader than the cited treaty. Third, presence of a reference to a particular legal act will call for constant introduction of amendments into the policy law in the event of amendment or abolition of this treaty or appearance of a new legal act regulating the relations between the two states, in particular, for instance, a Constitutional Act of the Union State. In other words, the law will become dependent on concrete circumstances of development of relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Russian Federation. Fourth, anchoring the tenet of development of strategic partnership with a single particular country in the law runs counter to the principle of our multi-vector foreign policy, proclaimed by the Republic of Belarus, which was once again openly reiterated by the President of this country in his recent speech in the UNO. Considering the dynamism and concrete forms of Belarus' cooperation within other alliances in the post-Soviet realm, it seems inexpedient to anchor provisions for development of integration processes with regard to only one state in a policy law.»

After that one would have the impression that the deputies became prostrate. On the one hand, they had heard so much of strategic partnership with Russia from Alexander Lukashenko that it was difficult for them to understand the point of waiving this provision. On the other hand, Belarusian deputies, by virtue of their election specifics, are extremely obedient to their superiors. And the latter did not approve of the amendment. Hence the above-cited voting results.

Evaluating them, Andrey Sannikov, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, accentuated three points:

«The vote has once again confirmed that amendments, which have not been coordinated with the administration, do not get adopted even if they are extrinsically in line with the administration's policy. Second, this bears evidence to the existence of Russian lobby in Belarus, which operates through some deputies and seeks to link Belarus to Russia still more, not only through Lukashenko but also by means of such provisions in most essential documents. And,

lastly, let us not be concerned with Belarus at the moment. But in case a similar clause appears in any country's strategy, it is indicative only of its unilateral orientation and cooperation only with one country or party.»

Sergey Martynov, current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, is of a different opinion. According to him, the law «On Approving the Fundamental Lines of Domestic and Foreign Policy of the Republic of Belarus» is adopted «forever» and should not be changed. The Minister noted that the draft law is of a «framework, conceptual nature» and, «by definition, should not contain definitized tenets.» In particular, it may not reflect the prospects of Belarus' interaction with concrete nations, including Russia. According to him, this document will be given «practical contents» in the course of the foreign-policy line, pursued by the government of this country.

Some Belarusian experts are not prone to dramatizing the refusal of the deputies of the lower chamber to enter the provision of strategic partnership with Russia in the policy document. They believe there is no need to introduce the clause about Russia in the national legislation. Indeed, the union with Russia (or orientation towards it) was anchored at the referendum long ago (the referendum of May 1995 is meant). It is implemented in the framework of inter-governmental regulations. And in general, it seems somewhat surprising that the proposal put forward by some deputies was not coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Among Belarus' foreign policy objectives, which made part of the new law, there is on of «gaining a neutral status». Belarus is known to officially steer for neutrality. For instance, in the current Constitution (Article 18) it is recorded that «... the Republic of Belarus aims at making its territory a nuclear-free zone and its state a neutral one.»

How can membership in an international military organization (Collective Security Treaty Organization — CSTO) go together with a neutral policy? In his time, Stanislav Shushkevich, speaker of the Belarusian parliament, for a long time resisted Belarus' entry into this newly created organization, precisely for the reason that, in his opinion, neutrality and the (CSTO) are incompatible. But in the early 1990s the majority of the deputies, on the initiative of the pro-government group of «Belarus», brought the corresponding resolution through the Supreme Council and virtually forced Shushkevich to endorse the document developed in Tashkent.

However, Yelena Gritsenko, head of department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, is of a different opinion:

«I do not think there is a contradiction here. The CSTO is the only organization in the territory of the NIS that aims to defend the interests of the CSTO member-countries. This does not run counter to neutral status for, in the absence of a threat, the organization's functions encompass only information exchange and taking measures with respect to the problems that may represent a potential hazard. Neither the by-laws of the CSTO nor its position embed aggressiveness, which would run counter to the neutral state status of each of the member-countries.»

The opinion of Mecheslav Grib, another former head of the Belarusian parliament, is quite noteworthy. By the way, at the time of the CSTO creation he headed the parliamentary committee for national security, defense, and crime control. At that time he was one of Stan-

islav Shushkevich's most ardent opponents and believed that Belarus needed to join the CSTO as a defense-only organization. However, at present he thinks somewhat differently:

«At large, these two lines (neutrality and the CSTO membership) are incompatible because we should remain neutral with respect to all nations. At present no one threatens us or claims our territory. Therefore, we should stick to neutrality and not join anyone. As for the CSTO, when this Treaty was signed, it was meant that this organization is of defense-only nature. But if someone attacks one of the Treaty member-countries, the rest of the CSTO nations must help it. How will it be reconciled with neutral status then? It will not. So much for the defense nature of the CSTO! This has nothing to do with neutrality. The international community will not accept or understand such neutrality.»

This law, as deputy Krasutski noted, was adopted «for the first time in the life of this country and in the history of the Belarusian parliamentary system.» In the deputy's opinion, «this is quite consistent, as the Belarusian development model proved its viability in the realm of the NIS». Moreover, he claimed that none of the NIS countries, including the Russian Federation, had got such a document so far.

The new law identifies most important vectors of the State's activities. In accordance with this regulatory act, this country will structure its foreign and domestic policies for the future. The document has been developed on the basis of the Constitution and consists of two sections. The first one identifies domestic policy spheres. In the field of economics, the strategic objective is defined as establishing an effective socially-oriented market economy. The need for activation of investment and innovation operations is emphasized. The domestic policy of Belarus is based upon the principles of stability of the constitutional system, secured rights and liberties of citizens, equality of all forms of ownership, and social justice. The draft law reflects budget and finance, taxation, monetary, and foreign exchange policies. There have appeared new standards concerning investment and structural policy, healthcare, art, and housing relations. The second section records long-term foreign-policy orientation. It is built on the principles of enhancing the effectiveness of instruments of state sovereignty protection, voluntary entry into and participation in intergovernmental formations. Emphasis is laid on the importance of international cooperation and interaction in the space field. The foreign policy priorities now include such areas as education and tourism.

Vladimir Glod. 10.10.05.

REACTION TO DEMOCRATIC CHOICE

While Moscow is having a gripe session with Kiev by means of «gas diplomacy», the allied Minsk is attempting to uncoil another spiral of tension with Warsaw

Aggravation of relations between Moscow and Kiev concurrently with the enunciation of the Democratic Choice Commonwealth does not appear a simple coincidence. It was joined by Russia's neighboring countries from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The idea of the new Com-

monwealth was perceived to be anti-Russian and as an alternative to the NIS, where Moscow attempts to dominate. And, on the whole, the Kremlin is known to have taken the triumph of the Orange Revolution as its own defeat, while its Belarusian ally saw it as a threat to its sovereignty. Judging by the work of the state propaganda apparatus and politicians' statements, we are still a long way from establishing normal Belarus-Ukraine contacts at the high and supreme levels. Apparently, with regard to the commitments on coordinating foreign policies of the two parts of the virtual union state, official Minsk took the baton from Moscow to «construct» relations with Warsaw.

The rulers of Belarus did not expect the results of the parliamentary and presidential election in the neighboring Poland, which took place in the fall, to be of any good for themselves; even when Self Defense Party, whose leader Lepper used to be a guest at Lukashenko's residence, joined the coalition with the winning Law and Justice Party. With regard to the Belarusian leader, there is a consensus of opinion among the Polish establishment. Therefore, the ruler can hardly hear any nice personalias from Warsaw, especially after the scandalous dispersal of the administrative body of the Union of the Poles, one of the largest NGOs of Belarus. Belarusian authorities do not need independent NGOs. Moreover, they regard them as a hazard, especially with regard to the experience of the driving forces of the Ukrainian revolution.

The embassies of Belarus and Poland in the capitals of both countries are currently almost «exsanguinated». Following a series of reciprocal renvois of diplomats on the eye-for-eye principle, the personnel of the two neighbors' diplomatic missions was reduced to uncus-tomary minimum. Minsk lost the Polish Ambassador, who resigned because of accusations of being unable to improve advocacy of Poland's interests. It may be said that, in view of these interests, Warsaw has lately started to undertake certain steps to remedy the abnormal situation. For example, it has recently applied to the Belarusian MFA with a request to accredit another staff member — the fourth military man in the Polish Embassy. The Belarusian Embassy in Warsaw has only one military diplomat. Minsk is unlikely to take such an imbalance positively.

The situation with appointing a new Poland's ambassador to Belarus does not seem quite clear either. After unofficial information, among the candidates there is former Polish ambassador to Ukraine Marek Ziolkowski, who worked in Minsk in the 1990s. But the most likely candidate to become a new ambassador may be National Security Bureau chief Jerzy Bar. He is also familiar to the Belarusian side after the conducted meetings with Gennadi Nevyglas, State Secretary of the RB Security Council, and tri-lateral contacts, with the involvement of Ukraine, on the issues of border cooperation. However, in view of the planned new appointments to Minsk, attention is drawn to the fact that after Stefan Meller had been transferred from Moscow, where he was ambassador, it is his former subordinates who became candidates for positions in Minsk, including the above-mentioned military diplomat and another candidate ambassador to Belarus. The Minister's bent for his staff members is generally understood. It is most essential that, if they get selected, they should be able to quickly adjust to the Belarusian reality. And this reality is very different to that of Moscow. In the coming year Belarus is expecting an important event — a presidential election. And Poland's diplomatic mission in Belarus, as well as missions of other EU countries, will operate under very difficult conditions.

The developments in relations between Minsk and Warsaw, which have been observed in the recent days, bear evidence to that.

Belarusian Ambassador to Poland Pavel Latushko was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland. He was received by Wojciech Zainczykowski, Deputy Head of Europe Department. The Polish MFA demanded explanations from the Belarusian Ambassador with respect to the refusal of Belarusian border guards to allow entry to Belarus to Michal Dvorczik, Councilor to Prime Minister of Poland Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz. Belarusian border guards said he «was a persona non grata in the territory of the Republic of Belarus». According to Pavel Dobrowolski, Polish Foreign Ministry Spokesman, this incident is unacceptable in the relations between two European states. He also noted that «the Ministry took notice of the explanations provided by the Belarusian Ambassador». «I cannot say that Poland-Belarus relations can qualify as good,» Mr. Dobrowolski said.

We can add to this story that on 13th December Agnieszka Romaszewska, correspondent of the Polish Public TV (TVP) was detained in Minsk-2 airport by Belarusian border guards. According to TVP, Romaszewska was refused entry to Belarus. She was explained that she would not be allowed into the country on the basis of the law regulating foreign nationals' stay in Belarus. Meanwhile, as they emphasized at the TV company, Romaszewska has official accreditation as a permanent correspondent, issued by the MFA of Belarus.

The events that took place in Belarusian–Polish relations during the last days of the ending year are indicative of the twisting of a new spiral of tension. And, regardless of the defiant condescension attitude of Lukashenko's statements on the forum of the Democratic Choice Commonwealth that took place in Kiev (in his opinion, such a commonwealth does not have a future), the current behavior of official Minsk toward its neighbors can be with a high degree of probability regarded as a nervous reaction to the democratic choice they made.

Roman Yakovlevsky. 15.12.05.

WASHINGTON'S WARNING

The US Government and European partners may take a number of possible resolutions and steps in their approach to Belarus

At a special meeting with a group of journalists invited to the US Embassy in Minsk, George Krol, US Ambassador to Belarus, confirmed that facilitation of democracy development remained the long-term policy of the US with respect to Belarus. In this context, the Belarus Democracy Act, unanimously passed by the US Congress last year, is of importance. There is a range of possible resolutions and step, Ambassador Krol emphasized, which the US Government and European partners might take in their approach to Belarus. To quote him, these potential resolutions and steps are being actively reviewed by the Government of the United States. For instance, the report on the accounts and property owned by the Belarusian leaders, envisaged in the Democracy Act, remains at the stage of preparation with the US government machinery.

It should be noted that the US Congress for the first time in history passed a special law on Belarus. American legislators were pushed to take such a decision by the consistent policy that the Belarusian ruler had been pursuing for 11 years. In the opinion of the world community, the baseline principles of this policy run counter to the generally accepted norms and standards. If previously these contradictions had been successively recorded by national parliaments of European nations, the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and the European Union, now the subject was brought before the UN, where a position of special spokesperson for Belarus was established. Over the past year, active critics of Lukashenko regime have been joined by Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova. The object of this criticism has been known to respond by intensifying oppressive measures with regard to the opposition, NGOs, and mass media. The world community began to pressurize and criticize Moscow, which continues defend Lukashenko internationally and provide financial and material assistance to him. As many politicians and analysts believe, the opponents of the ruling circles are losing hope that the Kremlin will put the heat on Lukashenko with the purpose of democratizing Belarus. From the standpoint of several observers, the reforming of the government and strengthening of control over mass media that are currently taking place in Russia, is by no means an illustration of democracy. They also note the synchronism of anti-American propaganda campaigns observed in Russian and Belarusian mass media, especially on state-owned TV channels. And Belarus does not have any other kind of TV.

Ambassador Krol told the journalists that in view of the massive campaign launched by the Belarusian TV, which demonstrates hatred of extraordinary intensity for the American people, the US Embassy in Minsk was forced to impart to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus its apprehension of the «anti-American campaign in the state-owned mass media.» Such a position of the Belarusian authorities casts the relations between the two countries back to the worst cold war times.

Mr. Krol said that the United States interestedly observes the preparation in Belarus for the election campaign of 2006. The Ambassador noted that the Belarusian opposition is still separated from the Belarusian community by means of a media blockade. Belarusian citizens do not have free access to information and there is no free exchange of opinions, which is necessary for a free election process. This very much disturbs the world community and brings into a question if the 2006 election is going to be free, fair, and democratic. «Democratic election in Belarus is under threat,» US Ambassador George Krol stated.

Roman Yakovlevsky. 17.11.05.

BELARUS' MISSION

In 2006 Belarus intends to lead the process of collecting the lands of the former Soviet empire

Acknowledgement of the disintegration of the post-Soviet realm as historically inevitable by some of its entities is being postponed again, despite the recent trends. On the oppo-

site, some are still nursing schemes to turn back this process. In 2006 Belarus intends to lead the crusade for collecting the lands from Brest to Vladivostok. It is already known that, first, it has been tasked with organizing the anniversary summit of the NIS; second, it is going to take the chair in the EvrAzES (Eurasian Economic Community); and, third, its turn to preside in the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) is approaching.

The beginning of this year turned out to be exceedingly scandalous in the family of the former Soviet republics. Russia's «gas attack» on Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Moldova caused them to burst with indignation with respect to the «big brother's» behavior and make sounding declarations of permanent alienation with Moscow as a center for unification processes in the post-Soviet realm. Their rather expressive negative attitude toward Belarus, which Moscow charged the old price for gas, allegedly for its «model behavior», was just as natural.

There is no doubt that both participants of this «gas war» and the remaining members of post-Soviet formations, such as the NIS, the EvrAzES, the CSTO, and the EEP (Uniform Economic Space), will not be able to free themselves from these feelings and emotions in the near months, or maybe even years. But they will never change their geographical coordinates with respect to Moscow. In general, the wounds received in that bickering are still green. Along with that, demonstrations of peaceful initiatives are inevitable. One of them is already known to be brought forward by Belarus in the current year.

The issues of the national policy in multilateral integration associations in the post-Soviet realm made the topic of a special meeting conducted by President Alexander Lukashenko. To quote him, Belarus is to accomplish «important tasks» in the framework of its current chairmanship in the EvrAzES and forthcoming chairmanship in the CSTO. «There are more than enough problems there and all heads of states are waiting to see what Belarus is going to do during its chairmanship in these organizations», Lukashenko noted. He demanded from his company to identify the scope of Belarusian initiatives for the forthcoming summits, «We need to introduce such proposals, which would give a nudge to the integration processes, revived them in some aspects and could just remedy the situation in other aspects.»

Sergey Martynov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who spoke in the meeting, pronounced the need for defining functions of the NIS in various fields with more precision. «It is necessary to enhance interaction in the spheres of combating terrorism and human trafficking and suppression of drug trafficking,» the head of the Foreign Service pointed out. He also spoke in favor of intensifying social and humanitarian cooperation.

Pointing out the strategic position of the EvrAzES member-countries in Eurasia and the substantial economic potential of the Community, Sergey Martynov did not rule out the possibility of giving this organization some political functions. To quote the Minister, the Belarusian side has prepared initiatives on development of the EvrAzES, which are drawn in the form of President's of Belarus Address to his colleagues.

Sergey Martynov named the main objective of the CSTO to be integration of the Organization into the international security architecture. To quote him, we need to achieve the international acknowledgement of this organization as an equal partner to other security structures.

Sergey Martynov brought forward a proposal for all concerned ministries and agencies to promptly and clearly formulate what they suggest for and look forward to gain from participation in the NIS, the Eurasian Economic Community, and the Collective Defense Treaty Organization. On the basis of these suggestions it is intended to develop and adopt President's directives on each of these integration formations.

President of Belarus also declared his personal standpoint at this meeting: it involves retaining and developing of the «broad» NIS in the 12-state format along with simultaneous strengthening of regional integration associations. «Lately there has been much criticism of the NIS, alleging that it is a mechanism for «civilized divorce» rather than integration of nations and that we will never reach the EU level. The positive role of the NIS is even further disclaimed by leaders of some countries, who try to earn a reputation with their foreign patrons by means of slogans of separation from the NIS. I mean such associations as GUAM (the union of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova), the so-called Democratic Choice Community,» the Belarusian leader said.

To put it mildly, there are serious doubts that Lukashenko is going to succeed in «bringing to reason» the GUAM and DCC leaders, especially Yushchenko and Saakashvili, persuading them to abandon the «non-indigenous» neoformations in favor of the good old NIS order. Last year dictator Lukashenko and revolutionaries Yushchenko and Saakashvili «the» more than once displayed their mutual disaffection. On the other hand, it seems that the Belarusian leader hardly believes himself in such «rehabilitation» of his colleagues. As Yushchenko has been declaring, Ukraine is definitely not going to closely integrate with its former USSR «relatives» in the prejudice of the European vector.

Judging by Lukashenko's statements, Belarus none the less intends to focus its leading mission on integration of the post-Soviet realm within the structures where there are no «revolutionaries» and their influence, primarily in the EvrAzES. «We, as presiding party, do not have the right even to think that the EvrAzES should keep on «dying away». We are pondering on initiatives that could boost work. It all quite simple: we need to solve two or three major issues, which will be of interest and keep the states in the EvrAzES,» Belarusian President is convinced.

As such issues Lukashenko regards those of railway tariffs and custom union creation, «If Russia is unable to supply everyone with natural gas and oil, these natural resources are available in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Russia should not impede supply of hydrocarbon, say, to Belarus or Ukraine». In his opinion, settling of these problems will enhance attractiveness of the EvrAzEs.

At present a message from the chair of the EvrAzES Intergovernmental Council to the heads of its member-states is being prepared. To quote Lukashenko, at the forthcoming EvrAzES summit in St. Petersburg Belarus is going to bring forward «concrete proposals» for studying. «If the heads of states agree to them, we will move in this direction. This is rapprochement-oriented motion,» the Belarusian President believes.

Lukashenko explains his strive for integration and strong concern about the situation in the post-Soviet realm by the need to resist the adversaries in the name of the US and the EU, apart from everything else. However, it is necessary to understand that it is actually closely

linked to the presidential election in Belarus. The Belarusian leader once again lets both all his friends and foes abroad and his fellow countrymen see that absolutely nothing will change here after 19th March. Maybe it will not, indeed. But another thing is also true: after this date the official Minsk will definitely have less desire to make a fuss about integration.

Mikhail Dashuk. 19.01.06.

RUSSIAN BEETLE AND EUROPEAN BLOCK

Europe has never been in such consensus with regard to Belarus

The observers are unanimous: during the past weeks Europe displayed unprecedented fervency, or even ostentation, in tackling the «Belarusian issue». The degree of interest in this issue is rising as 19th March is approaching – the date of the presidential election in the country with a consistent reputation of the «last dictatorship in Europe.» At that, unprecedented attention is paid to contacts with top oppositionists. Alexander Milinkevich, a potential rival to the irremovable President Lukashenko, was given the green light to make an impressive tour of the Old World's political centers. After the New Year Milinkevich managed to meet Phillip Dust-Blazi, Foreign Minister of France, Polish President Lech Kaczynski, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso, and other EU leaders. A bit earlier he had met Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus. The leader of the Belarusian opposition also was given the floor in Poland's Seim, the European Parliament, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and, in addition, spoke at a series of important international forums and informal executive meetings. This is truly an unprecedented thing. None of the political opponents of the system had been honored with such a cascade of receptions in the Old World capitals. And this looks especially spectacular against the background of blind confrontation between the official Minsk and the West, whereupon President Lukashenko has not been invited to Europe for a long time.

In the meantime, harsher overtones have sounded in declarations made by European bodies on the «Belarusian issue». This concerns both assessments of the state policy and possible measures of retaliation to be applied to the top officials in the event of failing to ensure a fair election. Europe is preparing to make a massed lodgment of observers. Besides, Brussels accelerated the startup of a large project on independent broadcasting on Belarus. The leader of the Belarusian opposition himself thinks that «Europe has never been in such consensus with regard to Belarus.» Hot on the trail after his voyage through the Old World capitals, Alexander Milinkevich gave an interview to «Wider Europe» portal.

Summarizing the results of your tour – what is in the «dry residue»?

A.M. «It is of the greatest importance that Europe has seen a clear democratic perspective in Belarus and is willing to actively assist it as never before. Previously they took different positions with regard to the Belarusian issue over there. Some said that maybe he should not be messed with at all; if Belarusians love their president so much, let their society mature to democracy. Others advocated a very hard approach. At present, as I became convinced at my

meetings, practically the entire Europe has the same standpoint. It cannot leave this country in a grave, undemocratic condition.

«First of all, we border on the European Union. And a dictatorship is always unstable, unpredictable, and aggressive. Second, along with concern about its own security, Europe also feels morally indebted. Human rights, democracy, election in full compliance with the law — these are no idle words for the Europeans. I made sure: it is not true that Belarus allegedly is not welcome to Europe. I could see that during the meeting with our delegation foreign politicians had their eyes light up. They began to feel that Belarus is not such a bog of pessimism, as some of them had believed. They found that we have a strong and energetic alternative to the current power.»

Official Minsk claims that Europe is allegedly not burning with desire to butt in the Belarusian affairs, but is pushed by Washington... How would you comment on that?

A.M. «Any attempts to drive a wedge between Washington's and Brussels' positions concerning the «Belarusian issue» are hopeless. At present it is a single position. This is what the joint visit of high-rank US and EU representatives to Minsk was supposed to demonstrate. The Belarusian officials followed their ritual, refusing to issue them visas at the same time. As a result, Washington and Brussels jointly refused to visit, thus confirming their unified approach.»

Along with that, there is an opinion that Europe does not want to confront Russia because of Belarus...

A.M. «Naturally, Europe does not need confrontation with Moscow. It is very soothing for Europe when we persuade them that the Belarusian democratic movement is absolutely not anti-Russian; when we say that we are capable of building more honest, transparent, and predictable relations with Russia than the current establishment. Yes, we emphasize that independence is a holy thing for us. But it is exactly on the ground of independence that we can both take our relations with Russia to a new level and build relations with Europe from ground zero.»

There prevails an opinion that, despite all their good intentions, Western nations simply do not have effectual mechanisms to influence the situation in Belarus. Do you agree with that?

A.M. «Certainly, one can throw many such stones... But the «fault» of the unified Europe is limited, perhaps, only to its being democratic for a long time and has unlearned to «handle» dictatorships. Therefore, it is indeed necessary to seek effectual mechanisms. After all, if the Belarusian authorities are unwilling to cooperate and brush aside all proposals, it is their problem. But at the same time this country has a civil community, mass media, parties, trade unions... It is they who should be closely cooperated with, and we accentuated this in our discussions all the time. We were persuading them, for instance, that it would be worthwhile to provide an easier visa issue policy for Belarusians. By the way, some European parliamentarians took up the idea and took it further, speaking of issue of visas free of charge. Naturally, this is a complicated problem and it cannot be solved in a day. Just making visas cheaper will be a success. The more average Belarusians are able to see with their own eyes how Europe

lives and what it is inspired by, the more our society will be convinced that the current authorities retarded and suspended this country's development.»

The official Belarusian propaganda claims that opposition leaders arrange their personal business abroad. They allegedly prepare alternate landing sites for themselves over there and soon they will surely escape, exposing their naïve rank-and-file supporters...

A.M. «While traveling around the country, I have more than once announced to our fellow citizens that we united for real and for long. Until the complete victory of democracy. I mean our coalition, which last fall conducted the Congress of the Democratic Forces in Minsk. And I, as a leader elected by the Congress, am not going anywhere. I have a settled intention to work in Belarus under any political climate – not to seek refuge in the West, but do everything to create decent standards of living for all Belarusians in our common home. So that my fellow countrymen, my children and grandchildren would live in a prosperous and free country.»

And still, not to mince words — what can your international activity give to your country and its average citizens?

A.M. «Educated and active young Belarusians understand that it is impossible to improve prosperity of their homeland without cooperation with the community of democratic nations. Let me reiterate myself: they are ready to open a door for us. In the event of democratic changes, Belarus will receive investments and new technologies. New modern plants will be built and new jobs will be created. Belarus will be transformed! Currently we are closed. Fear reigns in the society. Performance figures are achieved by means of a whip. We will destroy this atmosphere of fear. Belarusians are fully entitled to a decent life.»

During meetings in Strasburg, Brussels, and other political centers of the Old World you accentuated the issue of assistance to non-governmental mass media and independent awareness-building among your countrymen. What are the motives behind this?

A.M. «It is because of the information blockade in our society that fear and apathy became so wide-spread. We are grateful to Europe for its willingness to help us break through this blank wall. In the course of discussions, our delegation emphasized that such assistance should be provided in a number of lines. It is important to pay attention not only to organization of TV and radio broadcasting from abroad, but also to help those who deal with independent awareness-building within this country, which is anything but simple. Over here, in spite of the horrendous pressure, there are still newspapers that courageously fight for truth. They should be supported in every way. The Internet is becoming an increasingly important means of communication, especially for the young. Thus, radio and television are certainly quite significant, but it is also of importance that such projects should not become something like a fashion and not shadow other areas. In general, provision of free information to the Belarusian society calls for an integrated approach.»

Do you believe that the European Union launches media projects for Belarus for real and for long, and not just to «tick it off,» as Brussels' critics claim?

A.M. «I am absolutely sure of this. One hundred percent sure, since I have had substantive discussions on this point and seen a number of documents with my own eyes.»

What is your action program for the culminating point of the election campaign, considering the forecasts by independent experts that the authorities will rigidly stick to its scenario, with the official leader taking the game with a «smashing score»?

A.M. «We are not going to play by the script of the authorities. It is clear that they on high are preparing to announce unconditional victory of the current leader. But we are placing our stake on people's intelligence, common sense, and courage. I am sure that on the Election Day the society will clearly realize that this power has completely lost its authority. And even its proponents will feel that this system is not worth supporting».

Thus, you do not think that, as pessimists keep saying, «the score of the match is already known»?

A.M. «If I had not traveled the length and breadth of this country, I possibly would not have become so convinced that we have accumulated a tremendous potential for change. I am absolutely sure that we are able to get over 50 percent of the vote. The most important thing is for people to clearly understand that this victory has been achieved, that we have won. This is what we preparing ground for. In case the authorities announce the results that are contrary to people's will, the worse for them. This will mark the beginning of the end of this system».

So, Brussels have activated its politics at the Belarusian front. Along with that, observers note that the leader of the Belarusian opposition, inspired by the results of his busy trip, may somewhat exaggerate the degree of unanimity and activeness of Europe with respect to promoting democratization of his country. In the opinion of critics, the recent PACE resolution on the Belarusian issue once again abounds in generalizations. And the specifics, such as threats to expand the «black list» of Lukashenko's officials, who are not going to be allowed in the West, do not look overly scary to the top officials either, since they are used to isolation. Experts have questions about organization of tenders for broadcasting to Belarus, as well as about the effectiveness of the very concept of this broadcasting.

Observers note inconsistent policies pursued by several neighboring countries with regard to the official Minsk. In particular, supporters of a more flexible approach to contacts with Belarusian authorities are strong in Lithuania. Critics call this unscrupulous flirting with the dictatorship. Proposals on simplifying visa policies for Belarusians stumble upon the fence of bureaucratic machinery and fears of the tide of illegal migration.

Also, a question is often asked as to the effectiveness of regular appeals of European authorities to the Kremlin with the purpose of impelling it to do some «educational work» with the Belarusian leaders. In any case, at a recent PACE session the Russian delegation ardently defended its ally. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that at a major news conference in Moscow on 31st January Vladimir Putin gave a rather equivocal answer to the question by France Press concerning Moscow's support of Lukashenko's rule. «As for my meetings with the President of Belarus, they have to do with support of the Belarusian people, who are fraternal to us, rather than support of the regime, as you have put it,» the Russian leader remarked. In saying that, Putin emphasized that «we run integration processes with Belarus. These processes are anything but simple, quite complicated. They often lead to a very sharp debate, as it happened

two years ago when «detaching» prices for energy sources for Belarus from Russian domestic prices. Everyone should remember this. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to say that we are supporting a particular political figure at all costs.» This way Putin recalled the «gas war» of 2004, forgotten by many, when Belarus became the first, long before Ukraine, to experience Moscow's special weapon — interruption of the natural gas supply. A few days earlier Alexander Lukashenko also recalled that «gas war» in a large interview to the national TV channels. He could hardly hide his apprehension speaking of the inevitable growth of gas prices and the need to convert to resource-saving technologies and mitigating power dependency on Russia. Can this be a pure coincidence?

Just a small flashback: after the two presidents' December meeting in Sochi there were talks of Lukashenko's receiving Moscow's approval to run for his third presidency not for free, but in return for a promise to trade off BelTransGaz shares. The gas transporting system of Belarus has long been a coveted catch for Gazprom. The version of backroom agreements has been heated up by statements by top-managers of Gazprom itself, which made believe that the Belarusian «pipe» was basically a put-up job. However, Lukashenko's and his high-rank officials' latest statements dispersed illusions on that score. Minsk still evaluates BelTransGaz at USD 5 billion, which is unacceptable for Moscow. Besides, the Kremlin is apparently irritated by the obstinacy of the Belarusian side in discussion of the draft Constitutional Act of the Union State and its unwillingness to introduce the RF rouble as a single currency for the two countries. Observers believe that in both cases the authoritarian Belarusian ruler does not want to sacrifice a penny-weight of his individual power.

In the opinion of some experts, Russia may start seriously pressurizing Belarus. However, it will not be because of the appeal from the West and definitely not for the sake of sublime ideas of democracy, but will be conditioned by Russia's economic interests and great power aspirations. Nevertheless, the «last dictatorship in Europe» is at risk to find itself between the beetle and the block.

Vital Voronovich. 06.02.06.

SECURING INSECURITY: THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF THE EU'S INTERNAL SECURITY REGIME AND ITS EASTERN NEIGHBORS

The evolution of the EU amidst the continued dramatic changes in Europe and the world has been radically changing its fundamental concepts, institutions and policies. Security is one such area where the speed and scope of transformations have been most stunning. It has been steadily losing its internal/external dichotomy and while the shaping of the CFSP and the ESDP is still underway, Justice, Freedom and Security (JFS or JLS — the French acronym) that is more and more often used in place of «Justice and Home Affairs» (JHA) are acquiring an external dimension and demand enhanced cross-pillar coordination, as well as new forms and mechanisms for coping with the external environment. Internal security experienced two

parallel processes: «Europeanization» and «externalization.»¹ The latter is only a recent innovation and is therefore in its formative stage.

AN EVOLVING DIMENSION

The Treaty of Amsterdam on the European Union which came into force on 1 May 1999 stated that the EU:

- must be maintained and developed as an area of freedom, security and justice;
- (an area) in which the free movement of persons is assured;
- in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating crime.

To this effect, the October 1999 Tampere European Council (the first-ever devoted to JHA) adopted a first work program, which implementation was achieved in 2004. At the Feira European Council it was emphasized that the justice and home affairs must be «incorporated into the Union's overall external strategy as a contribution towards the establishment of the area of freedom, security and justice.»² In 2000 an agreement was reached on general principles on external relations of JHA and a plan containing priorities for the external dimension of JHA, known as the Tampere Scoreboard. The EU's specific objectives here are to foster political stability, economic prosperity, and the rule of law with neighboring countries. This encompasses overcoming such challenges as restoring the rule of law, controlling migratory movements and fighting organized crime. The guiding principles for the external dimension of JHA are fourfold:

- relevance in creating an area of freedom, security and justice;
- added contribution to actions already performed by Member-States;
- contribution to the general political objectives of the EU's external policy;
- completion within a reasonable period of time.³

On 4 November 2004 the European Council adopted the Hague Programme, which set the objectives to be implemented in the period 2005–2010. The Hague Programme has a whole page on external relations where it considers the development of a coherent external dimension of the Union policy of freedom, security and justice as a «growing priority». It called for a strategy on external relations by the end of 2005. The strategy should reflect the Union's special relations with third countries, groups of countries and regions, and focus on the specific needs for JHA cooperation with them.

¹ Anderson, Malcolm, and Apap, Joanna. *Changing Conceptions of Security and their Implications for EU Justice and Home Affairs Cooperation*. Centre for European Policy Studies. CEPS Policy Brief no. 26 (October 2002); Bigo, Didier. When two become one. Internal and external securitisations in Europe // Kelstrup, Morten S., and Williams, Michael C. (Eds). *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration. Power, Security and Community*. — London–New York: Routledge, 2000.

² Santa Maria Da Feira European Council. 19 and 20 June 2000. Conclusions of the Presidency. http://www.europarl.eu.int/summits/fei1_en.htm#IV

³ Justice and home affairs a key area in the European Union's relations with third countries and international organizations. http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/external/fsj_external_intro_en.htm

All powers available to the Union, including external relations, should be used in an integrated and consistent way to establish the area of freedom, security and justice. The following guidelines should be taken into account:

- the existence of internal policies as the major parameter justifying external action;
- need for value added in relation to projects carried out by the Member States;
- contribution to the general political objectives of the foreign policies of the Union;
- possibility of achieving the goals during a period of reasonable time;
- the possibility of long-term action.⁴

The External relations and Enlargement unit has been created under the European Commission's DG JLS to ensure that the Justice and Home Affairs dimension is fully incorporated into the EU's external policy in order to spread the values of justice, freedom and security to third countries. The Justice and Home affairs component of external relations covers a broad range of themes:

- the external dimension migration policy: importance of effective control of the EU's external borders and signing readmission agreements with countries from which migratory flows originate;
- the fight against specific forms of crime such as financial crime, money laundering, corruption and trading in human beings;
- the fight against drug trafficking: the EU finances measures for preventing and fighting against drug production and trafficking in several parts of the world;
- the strengthening of non-military aspects of crisis management and security through police cooperation in crisis regions.⁵

The implementation of the Justice and Home Affairs dimension in external relations is based on a number of different tools, including:

- legal agreements with a justice, freedom and security chapter;
- bilateral and ministerial meetings;
- assistance programs;
- sub-committees;
- declarations;
- action plans.⁶

The Constitutional treaty, along with other changes, envisaged strengthening the powers of EU institutions, considerably reducing the inter-governmental character of JHA decision-making and putting in place a more co-decisional procedure. In this way it could seriously facilitate the harmonization and unification of JHA rules, procedures and policies of the mem-

⁴ Presidency Conclusions — Brussels, 4/5 November 2004. 14292/04 11. Annex I. The Hague Programme. Strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union.

⁵ Justice and Home Affairs are a key in the European Union's relations with international organizations. http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/external/international/fsj_external_organisations_en.htm

⁶ External Relations and Enlargement – DG JLS – European Commission
http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/justice_home/external/dg_external_en.htm

ber-states. It could offer also a greater flexibility of actions. Under the so-called «accelerator clause» it would allow at least on-third of member states to proceed with their initiative even if it has been blocked in the Council.⁷ This treaty, however, has not gone as far as to overcome the current fragmentation of Justice and Home Affairs, which are found in all the three EU pillars.

From the functional point of view the external dimension of the area of FSJ can be discerned in the three EU policy paradigms, which are separate from one another, mutually contradictory, though not necessarily mutually exclusive but, yet again, not well-connected or coordinated (See Figure 1).

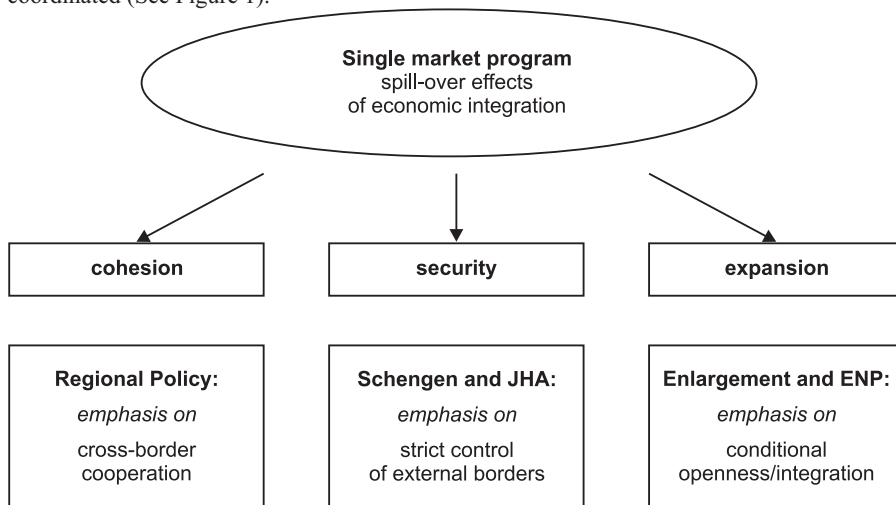


Figure 1. Three policy paradigms and their implications for external borders⁸

The current unprecedented EU enlargement coupled with constitutional and other problems and terrorist attacks have further transformed the context, in which the Union's JHA system is being shaped. The «internal» security cannot be any more confined solely to the territory of the Union and its member-states. Additionally, an ambitious European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is striving to create a «ring» of stability and prosperity (i.e. to «project» security) along the perimeter of the enlarged EU.⁹

⁷ See: Provisional consolidated version of the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe. Council of the European Union, Brussels. <http://european-convention.eu.int/docs/treaty/cv00850.en03.pdf>

⁸ See: Ehin, Piret. What kind of external borders for the EU? <http://ec.ut.ee/transition/External%20borders-Neighbourhood%20Policy.pdf>

⁹ See: European Neighbourhood Policy Strategy Paper. Communication from the Commission, Brussels, 12/05/04. Also: Waever, Ole. The EU as a Security Actor. Reflections from a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security orders // Kelstrup, Morten S., and Williams, Michael C. (Eds). *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration. Power, Security and Community*. — London–New York: Routledge, 2000.

JHA, THE ENP AND THE “NEW” EASTERN NEIGHBORS: IS THERE A PLACE FOR A FSJ AREA?

The Union and its ENP are facing multiple security challenges on the Eastern borders. Cooperation on Justice and Home affairs with the “new” Eastern neighbors has been difficult, inefficient, lacking a systemic character or, at best, rudimentary.

Firstly, the ENP has failed to embrace Russia along with Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Nevertheless, EU–Russia relations seem to be more advanced than those with Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, including the area of JHA.

The EU–Russia relationship is conducted within the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement framework which established a JHA sub-committee and a JHA Permanent Partnership Council at ministerial level. High level meetings regularly take place between the Commissioner and the Presidential aide. Specific instruments to strengthen JHA cooperation have been jointly developed, such as the joint Action Plan on organized crime, and its implementation tool, the EU Liaison Officers network. Europol–Russia Cooperation Agreement concluded in November 2003 provided for a framework for cooperation on criminal matters between EU–ROPOL — the EU law enforcement organization and the Russian police. Under the TACIS technical assistance program, around €100 million has been spent on JHA projects, notably border management and support to judicial reform. The present Indicative Programme for the period 2004–06, covers judicial and law enforcement capacity building, the fight against organized crime, and terrorism, the fight against money laundering and migration issues, including support to improve the asylum system, tackle illegal migration and the issue of internally displaced people in need of protection.¹⁰

Under Justice, Freedom and Security the EU and Russia aim at preventing and combating illegal activities, such as trafficking in drugs, money-laundering, organized crime, corruption, illegal migration, trafficking in human beings and vehicle theft, as well as strengthening judicial cooperation. It also includes assistance in developing border infrastructures, upgrading customs and cross-border posts, and enhancing skills of their personnel. The European Council adopted the EU Action Plan on common action for Russia on combating organized crime in 2000.¹¹ On 10 May 2005 the EU–Russia Summit concluded with an agreement on a package of measures to create four EU/Russia «common spaces» in the fields of economy, external security, freedom, security and justice and education, research and culture. The principles, underlying the Common Space of Freedom, Security and Justice include democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and fundamental freedoms, including free and independent media and the effective application of common values by independent judicial systems. Work on this space provides for the adoption of agreements on readmission and visa facilitation. It encompasses cooperation on combating terrorism, organized crime and corruption. The road map for the Common Space of External Security underlines the shared responsibility of the EU and Russia for an international order based on effective multilateralism, their determina-

¹⁰ See: Common European Union strategy towards Russia in the area of justice and home affairs. http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/fsj/external/russia/fsj_external_russia_en.htm

¹¹ Justice, Freedom and Security. http://www.delrus.cec.eu.int/en/p_223.htm

tion to co-operate to strengthen the central role of the United Nations, and promote the role and effectiveness of relevant international and regional organizations, in particular the OSCE and the Council of Europe.¹²

Meanwhile, the «roadmap» format of EU cooperation with Russia is too «fuzzy» and misses concrete actions. As Michael Emerson writes, the four common spaces are a weaker and fuzzier still derivative of the neighborhood policy, giving only token attention to democracy and excluding explicit reference to EU norms as the reference points for Russian-EU convergence. They do not really inform about where the EU and Russia are heading.¹³

Secondly, Belarus is not fully engaged and is formally excluded from the EU's cooperation on security matters due to its notorious self-isolation.¹⁴ Among the countries on which the work of the European Commission's DG JLS External relations and Enlargement unit mainly focuses are Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova, but not Belarus. At the same time, in spite of serious political tensions and the absence of an institutionalized cooperation between the EU and Belarus in the security area the latter has been a recipient (or a potential recipient) of the Union's assistance on a number of security issues.¹⁵

Belarus is not found in any of the three levels of the EU's security co-operation with third states. However its strategic ally Russia is, at least formally, positioned on the second one.¹⁶ This fact, however, does not in any way alleviate issues neither for Belarus, nor for Russia. To date, both the post-Soviet and Russia-Belarus frameworks represent more of a space of common unresolved problems, rather than a «common security space». As Russian experts observe, in addition to an inefficient cooperation among law-enforcement bodies in the Commonwealth of Independent States, in Russia itself there remain a high level of crime and corruption on all levels of power and cooperation between the Russian and Western security structures is

¹² For the texts of EU-Russia «Road Map for the Common Space of Freedom, Security And Justice,» the «Road Map for the Common Space of External Security» and other documents see: http://www.delrus.cec.eu.int/en/images/pText_pict/465/Press%20release.doc

¹³ Emerson, Michael. EU-Russia Four Common Spaces and the Proliferation of the Fuzzy. Centre for European Policy Studies. CEPS Policy Brief no. 71/May 2005. P. 3.

¹⁴ Country Strategy Paper. National Indicative Programme Belarus 2005–2006. Adopted by the European Commission on 28 May 2004; Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau. «Belarus in the Geopolitics of the 'New Near East': an independent variable?» // *Enlarged EU — Enlarged Neighbourhood. Perspectives of the European Neighbourhood Policy*. Ed. by Nicolas Hayoz, Leszek Jesien, and Wim van Meurs. (Interdisciplinary Studies on Central and Eastern Europe, Vol. 2). Bern: Peter Lang, 2005; Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau. Whence the Möbius strip of Belarusian Politics? [The current trends in Belarus' relations with Russia, the US, the EU, and other international institutions] // Belarus: Youth, Politics and European Perspective. Smolensk: Neoprint, 2005.

¹⁵ See: Country Strategy Paper. National Indicative Programme Belarus 2005–2006.

¹⁶ Levels of security co-operation with third States and international organisations. Council of the European Union. 14400/04. Brussels, 9 November 2004.

inadequate.¹⁷ Even between such close allies as Russia and Belarus interaction in combating new security challenges leaves much to be desired.¹⁸

Thirdly, as for the Action Plans proposed for Ukraine¹⁹ and Moldova,²⁰ those can be realistically viewed as only the initial (and, besides, conditional) steps.

Moldova and Ukraine have become the first two East European states among the first seven of the EU's neighbors to agree Action Plans that make concrete the European Union's new offer under the European Neighbourhood Policy. The Action Plans will help strengthen democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights as well as helping with economic modernization. In addition the EU is offering more targeted help to tackle cross border issues, such as migration and trafficking. In the area of security the Plans will:

- step up co-operation on border management, migration, trafficking in human beings, organized crime, money laundering and financial and economic crimes,
- increase dialogue and co-operation on counter-terrorism, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as efforts to resolve regional conflict.

The plans do not replace, but build on the existing Association or Co-operation Agreement with each partner. The further a partner is ready to go in taking practical steps to implement common values, the further the EU will be ready to go in strengthening links.²¹

Fourthly, the overall political climate in the region (a «shared» or «common» Russia–EU neighborhood imbued with various political problems, e.g. the alleged Russia's claims on a special role in it's «near abroad») is not making the situation any easier.

In addition to the ENP, bilateral and multilateral JHA-related programs, which are conducted jointly with the UN offices there are also some «umbrella» projects to embrace Western NIS. The European Commission plans to launch a pilot program in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine to offer protection to refugees and manage migration flows. The program will be aimed at providing direct assistance and protection to refugees. According to the Commission

¹⁷ Fedorov, Andrei. Home Security: Russia's Challenges. A Russian Perspective // *European Homeland Security Post-March 11th and Transatlantic Relations*. European Security Forum Working Paper No. 17. Center for European Policy Studies, Brussels — The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London. October 2004. P. 25.

¹⁸ See, in particular: Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau. «EU Enlargement and Belarus: A 'Collage' of Security Spaces» // *Yevropeiskoye budushee Belarusi* [Belarus' European Future. In Russian]. Proceedings of a seminar. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Regional Bureau for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Ed. by Helmut Kurth. Minsk: Donarit, 2004; Also: Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau. *EU and Belarus: a transit of (in)security* [In Russian and in German]. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005.

¹⁹ See: Proposed EU/Ukraine Action Plan. <http://www.delukr.cec.eu.int/files/Action%20Plan%20Text-final-website.pdf> In 2001 an Action Plan on Justice and Home Affairs and the related scoreboard were agreed between the EU and Ukraine.

²⁰ See: Proposed EU/Moldova Action Plan. http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/pdf/action_plans/Proposed_Action_Plan_EU-Moldova.pdf

²¹ European Neighbourhood Policy: the first Action Plans. <http://www.delukr.cec.eu.int/site/page32426.html>

spokesman, «contacts with the government will be limited to what is strictly necessary for the efficient implementation of the projects and the program will be largely carried out through cooperation with nongovernmental organizations.»²²

Meanwhile, refugees seeking asylum in the European Union dropped in number by 34 per cent from 425,520 to 282,480 between 2002 and 2004. Great Britain and France are major destinations, receiving some 60,000 asylum seekers annually each. Over the same period the number of asylum seekers in the new EU member states has grown by 21 per cent. In 2003–2004 the greatest numbers of refugees to Europe came from Russia (9, 8 per cent of the total figure).²³

TRANSIT SECURITY OF THE EU'S EASTERN NEIGHBORS: A LIMITING FACTOR FOR THE SHAPING OF A PAN-EUROPEAN INTERNAL SECURITY REGIME

A major predicament for the shaping of a Pan-European internal security regime is a specific phenomenon of transit security of some of EU's Eastern neighbors. The latter either have no immediate interest in joining the European Union or sharing its values (Belarus), or indicate their interest in membership (Ukraine and Moldova), but may approach such opportunities in a relatively remote future.

The underlying security strategy of the European Union is based on creating structural soft security conditions in its international environment. However this strategy can succeed if there is a high degree of its neighbors' engagement in cooperation short of interdependence. Being rather far away from such status, these states perform functions of «relaying» (in)security among their international counterparts: other states, corporations, international organizations and actors, including sub-state units. Besides, their strategy is that of balancing among security risks and challenges of their neighbors.

This phenomenon is not unique with regard to some particular state and cannot be reduced to a sum of geopolitical, geo-economic or civilizational characteristics — geographical position at the juncture of or in between powerful political, economic, and/or civilizational centers, which are connected by mutually needed exchanges and interdependence.

Additionally, the states under discussion are typologically transitive. They have not yet finalized their political and economic model or have not yet made a definitive choice in favor of one or the other neighboring power centers. This reproduces ambivalence of national interests, identities and international subjectivity, which may manifest in contradictory relationships with neighbors.

A state pursuing a «transit security» policy relays, in addition to its own risks and challenges, those of its counterparts. This is being done not only in a «physical» form, but also through discourses²⁴: via diplomatic, political, economic, informational (including the mass media) means, and also in various situations of group and individual encounters at the professional (state bureaucracies, business, culture, etc.) or ordinary people-to-people levels.

22 EU to launch pilot refugee protection programme in Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova. 14/09/2005
<http://www.charter97.org/eng/news/2005/09/14/progr>

23 Ibid.

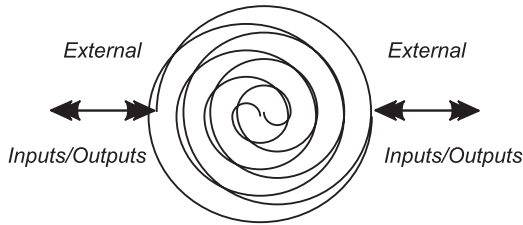


Figure 2. A Transit (In)security Model: receiving/accumulation/transformation/relaying

Therefore, an aggregated politico-informational space of a transit state is constantly generating various implications of transit challenges and risks, or, otherwise, is constructing them (See Figure 2.). In this sense security transit is simultaneously creating and destroying regional security complexes.

CONCLUSIONS

Globalization and the resultant impetus it has given to non-traditional transnational threats need flexible responses. To fight these «new» threats, a global enforcement regime has been created. At the UN and G8 level conventions against transnational organized crime and regulations to counter money laundering are accepted, while the UN Security Council has set in motion a global program against international terrorism. The wide array of multilateral agreements, conventions, rules and regulations on drugs, crime, money laundering and terrorism are reached at inter-governmental level (such as the UN, G8, the EU) and presented as a *fait accompli* before national parliaments that are pressured to ratify them. No government wants to be labeled as an outcast because a national parliament refuses to ratify these international agreements that are the result of complicated diplomatic bargaining and an alleged international consensus. At the level of the European Union a similar process is taking place in order to harmonize its justice and security area. Critics are saying that there are few mechanisms in place to evaluate the effectiveness or adverse effects of this regime, nor does it take any account of the root causes or grievances of those who have opposed the *status quo*. They emphasize the need to promote an alternative agenda to realign the focus of ‘security’ from enforcement and repression towards a «human security» agenda that looks to root causes and social solutions and puts more emphasis on good governance, social and economic development and human rights.²⁵

In October 2005 the European Commission adopted a strategy on the external dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice specifically addressing the task of engaging

²⁴ From the vantage point of social constructivism a communicative action is a rhetorical action. See, for example: Risse, Thomas. «Let’s Argue: Communicative Action in World Politics» // International Organization. Vol. 54. No. 1. Winter 2000. P. 1–39; Müller, Harald. «International Relations as Communicative Action» // Fierke, Karin M., Jørgensen, Knud Erik. Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation. — Armonk, New York — London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2001. Pp. 160–178.

the EU on these matters with third countries worldwide. The new Strategy outlines the main external challenges facing the area of freedom, security and justice identifies the objectives of the EU's external actions in this field, the issues to be addressed worldwide, the instruments at the EU's disposal and the principles for selecting appropriate actions, outlines how the strategy could be applied by geographic area and makes some recommendations to facilitate its implementation.²⁶ The document makes it a point that the projection of the values underpinning the area of freedom, security and justice is essential in order to safeguard the internal security of the Union. Thus, a further elaboration of the external dimension of the FSJ is making it more «inclusive» in the sense that there will be a smaller distinction between the internal and external meaning and application of the EU's concept of freedom, which is based on internal security provided through effective law enforcement and access to justice.²⁷

This, however, is sharpening the contrast between the EU and several FSU formations, which have declared similar goals in their integration efforts: the Russia–Belarus «Union State,» the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC), the Single Economic Space (SES), and, eventually, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). All of them agreed on the «four freedoms» as cornerstones of their conceptual documents and policy goals. Nevertheless, these «freedoms» are more of a «functional» or «technical» character²⁸ and do not match the EU *acquis*, least of all its *acquis* of JHA. This, in particular, refers to such EU priorities as human rights and strengthening institutions and good governments²⁹ — issues of great concern in the case of Belarus and other FSU states.

A brief analysis suggests that prospects for an early emergence of a European internal security regime (a regime of European governance for freedom, security and justice with its effective external dimension)³⁰ are rather dim. Under the present circumstances, one can observe a «collage» of security spaces³¹ between the EU and Eastern Europe, rather than an emerging Pan-European internal security regime. A further strengthening of elements of a «global enforcement regime,» some of which are already in place, may help to build support for the realization of a more distant goal. This, again, underscores the importance of the EU's strategic concept of effective multilateralism.³²

Vyachaslau Pazdnyak – Wider Europe Review. Vol. 2. No. 3 (Summer 2005).

²⁵ Global Enforcement Regimes. Transnational Organised Crime, International Terrorism and Money Laundering. TNI Crime and Globalisation seminar. Amsterdam, 28–29 April, 2005. Transnational Institute. <http://www.tni.org/crime>

²⁶ Communication from the Commission a strategy on the external dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice. Commission of the European Communities Brussels, 12.10.2005 COM(2005) 491 final http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0491en01.pdf

²⁷ See: Monar, Jörg. «An Emerging Regime of European Governance for Freedom, Security and Justice.» ESRC «One Europe or Several?» Programme Briefing Note 2/99, November 1999. Monar, Jörg. «Justice and Home Affairs in a Wider Europe: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion.» ESRC «One Europe or Several?» Programme Working Paper 07/00. <http://www.one-europe.ac.uk/pdf/monarW7.PDF>

²⁸ See, for example: Kontseptsiya formirovaniya Yedinogo ekonomicheskogo prostranstva [The Concept of shaping a Single economic space. In Russian], 19 September 2003.

²⁹ Communication from the Commission. A strategy on the external dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice. P. 6.

³⁰ For a conceptualization of a European internal security regime see: Monar, Jörg. “An Emerging Regime of European Governance for Freedom, Security and Justice.”

³¹ See: Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau. “EU Enlargement and Belarus: A ‘Collage’ of Security Spaces // Yevropeiskoye buduschee Belarusi [Belarus’ European Future. In Russian]. Proceedings of a seminar. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Regional Bureau for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. Ed. by Helmut Kurth. Minsk: Donarit, 2004; Also: Pazdnyak, Vyachaslau. EU and Belarus: a transit of (in)security [In Russian and in German]. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2005.

³² See: Communication from the Commission a strategy on the external dimension of the area of freedom, security and justice, and .Solana, Javier. A secure Europe in a better world. Document adopted at the European Council in Brussels, 12 December 2003. Paris: The EU Institute for Security Studies (December 2003).

DIVERSIFICATION OF BELARUSIAN EXPORTS THROUGH BALTIC PORTS

The Government of Belarus resolved to transfer part of cargo traffic from the Ventspils seaport to that of Klaipeda

Sergey Sidorski, Prime Minister of Belarus, announced in the course of his meeting with Petras Vaitekiunas, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Lithuanian Republic to Belarus, that it had been resolved to transfer part of cargo traffic from the Ventspils seaport to that of Klaipeda. This became the result of the efforts undertaken by Vilnius, which over the past years had been pursuing a consistent strategy on attracting an increasingly larger share of Belarusian exports through the Klaipeda seaport. For Minsk it became an advantageous option in view of the increasing threat of economic sanctions on the part of the European Union. It also could be a leverage to influence the policy of Riga, regarded in Minsk as non-amicable, which ostentatiously supports the Belarusian opposition.

«We have very good relations with the seaport of Klaipeda. Belarusian cargo currently covers over 25% of the Klaipeda seaport traffic,» the head of the Belarusian Government remarked during the meeting with Lithuanian Ambassador. To quote him, a decision was taken to transfer additional 100 thousand tons of cargo to the Klaipeda seaport from Ventspils. «Belarus accounts for over 20 million tons of cargo,» Sergey Sidorski said, emphasizing that the Klaipeda seaport needs to compete against those of Kaliningrad, St. Petersburg, and Nikolayev. So far this statement by Belarusian Prime Minister has received no comments from Moscow.

The head of the Belarusian Government also expressed his satisfaction with the development of trade and economic cooperation with Lithuania. «It is very important that Lithuanian businessmen are happy with the investment environment in Belarus», Sergey Sidorski stated, accentuating that Belarus has «one of the best and most transparent investment codes.» «The existing problems are contrived. Those who want to work confirm this,» believes Belarusian Prime Minister.

The advantage of the Klaipeda seaport is that it is the northernmost ice-free port and also the closest one to Belarus. It is 680 km from Minsk to Klaipeda and 1,100 km from Minsk to Ventspils. The port has a traffic capacity of 40 mln. tons. The Klaipeda port transports over 4,5 mln. tons of Belarusian cargo, 1,950 mln. tons of Russian cargo, and 12,943 mln. tons of that of Lithuania. The major share of Belarusian cargo is oil products, which take 445 of the total volume; they are followed by fertilizers (26%), food stuffs and forage (21%), and metal products (5%). Last year the Ventspils port transported 8.17 mln. tons of Belarusian cargo, the major part of which was oil products and fertilizers. The total cargo turnover of the seaport in 2004 made 27.8 mln. tons.

Besides, the Belarusian side has announced its intent to carry out a pilot delivery of potassium fertilizers through Kaliningrad in the 4th quarter of 2005. The capacity of the Kaliningrad port for handling Belarusian exports is evaluated at 1 mln. tons per year. Official Minsk is not giving up on using the capacities of the Gdansk seaport. In late summer these hopes were discussed at the level of Ministries of Transportation of Poland and Belarus.

Some observers believe that it is quite possible for Belarus' activity on diversification of its exports through Baltic ports to make another topic for discussion of the «Belarusian issue» in Brussels. According to the resolution of the European Commission, a monitoring of the Belarusian authorities' adherence to the rights of trade unions is currently being performed. A negative result of this monitoring may involve introduction of economic sanctions.

Roman Yakovlevsky. 27.10.05.

COOPERATION CANAL: CONSTRUCTION WORK AT THE AUGUSTOW CANAL CONTINUED EVEN IN WINTER

By June 1st, 2006 the Augustow Canal should be ready for commissioning. Apart from being a waterway, it is also regarded as a tourist sight. The prepared investment projects envisage constructing a mill, restaurants, country homesteads, a smithy, crafts centers, night clubs and even facilities for downhill skiing in the vicinity

BACKGROUND

The Augustow Canal was built from 1825 to 1839 on the initiative of the Polish Kingdom, after the designs by Polish engineers, but with the imperial assent of Russian Tsar Alexander I. The main reason for the construction was fear that Prussia's tariff policy will impede transportation of Polish and Lithuanian commodities to the Baltic coast. Approximately until the 1950s, water ways to the Baltic Sea were used primarily for drifting logs down the stream and carriage of passengers. The Augustow Canal is peculiar in that it starts from Necko Lake and stretches from one lake to another up to the border between Belarus and Poland. Nowadays it is actively used for tourism. According to Leszek Teczlik, burgher-master of the town of Augustow, during the season the Canal attracts up to 100 thousand tourists.

In Belarus, from the border to the village of Sonichi the Canal flows in the natural bed of the Chernaya Gancha River, then it flows in the man-made bed for 6.5 km to the Neman River. This is the shortest way from Poland to the Baltic Sea. The canal locks in Poland are recognized as first grade works of ancient engineering. In Belarus by 2004 they were 70% destroyed. Approximately in the mid 1950s, the Canal was abandoned on the Belarusian side. Frosts literally broke the cast iron bracings on the lock gates made of oak, while metal parts of hydraulic works, bricks from the bottom, and granite veneers were stolen by local residents. In 1993 an attempt was made to restore the Belarusian part of the Canal but no funds were found. It all ended with preparing design documentation.

BUILDERS OF TODAY

The modern history of the Canal started last December, after the publication of President's decree on restoration of the waterway of Augustow Canal. Its peculiarity lay in combination of theory and practice on a very tight schedule. Information to compare: while in the early 19th century it took 15 years to construct the Canal under General Pradzynski's guidance, its present restoration is to take a little over two years. The first builders showed up here on March 2nd, 2004, and the completion of work is scheduled for June 1st, 2006. Specialists of the oblast unitary enterprise of GrodnoMelioVodKhoz, who are current «hosts» of the construction, say that in six months — by May 10th, 2006 — they expect to fill the Canal with water. It means that by this time the canal locks should be completely ready and the navigation channel of the Chernaya Gancha River should be formed. Therefore construction work is continued in the winter time.

RESTORATION VARIANTS

Two variants for restoration of the Canal were originally proposed. The first one was to deepen the bed of the Chernaya Gancha River in order to let small tourist boats pass. The second one (which got selected) envisaged maximum restoration of the Canal the way it used to be, that is making the Chernaya Gancha navigable once again. It means that its bed should be at least 1.5 m deep and 6 m wide. However, it is impossible to restore the Canal to its original form. Over 180 years the water level in the Neman fell by two meters, therefore, the three-chamber navigation lock of Nemново, the largest in the entire Belarusian-Polish stretch of the Canal, received a fourth chamber. Besides, the Neman changed its bed, so the Canal became 1.8 km longer. The builders had to dig a new bed along the dead arm of the river (the old river-bed).

When fixing the banks, the builders stuck to old techniques in some places, sheathing the slopes with wooden slats and wooden poles. In other places they used gravel chippings and special canvas (grass can grow through it). The walls of canal locks used to be lined with granite and sandstone from Poland; nowadays these materials are imported from Bashkortostan and Carpathian mountains, respectively. In order to receive frost-proof and moisture-resistant bricks for the bottom of the lock chambers, a whole plant in Vitebsk oblast had to invent and develop it and have it certified.

The Chernaya Gancha River has been «straightened» and broadened in some places but its old circuitous course has not been drained. The river flows into the Neman concurrently with the straight line of the Canal. The swampy areas around the Canal have been drained. This way there appeared islands and meadow parks in the midst of the Canal. Here and there water has been piped in to form lagoons, ponds, and basins. As a rule, piers have been built next to them. A ferry crossing is completely ready in the vicinity of the village of Lesnaya. The ferry was purchased from the Petrikov Shipbuilding Plant for 200 million roubles. It will be soon delivered to Grodno. Air-cushion vessels (they have been ordered in St. Petersburg) will cruise along the Canal.

BELARUSIAN-POLISH COOPERATION

The navigation lock of Kuzhinets is situated immediately on the border between Belarus and Poland. From the Belarusian side, a seasonal border crossing point of Novaya Rudovka is situated right next to the lock, so currently there is no access to the monument of hydraulic engineering. From the Polish side there is free access to the lock. Restoration of Kuzhinets and its surrounding maintenance area is performed by Polish builders. The work is expected to be completed by the beginning of navigation. The approximate cost of the work is EUR 0.5 million. The construction work is regulated by a Belarusian-Polish agreement. The issue of drafting an international Belarusian-Polish agreement on the use of the Augustow Canal has been discussed. When the Canal becomes a single water artery, there is a proposal to enter it on the UNESCO list. The draft is currently being coordinated between the two sides.

PROJECT COST

It is intended to spend 33 billion roubles on restoration of the Augustow Canal. The sources of financing include the State Inspectorate for Protection of Fauna and Flora under the President of Belarus (the main source), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, the Grodno Oblast Committee for Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, and the Emergency Fund of the President of Belarus.

Inna Maximchik. 19.12.05.

IGNALINA PASSION

The talks with the EU on extending operation of the Ignalina nuclear power plant may resume

Algirdas Brazauskas, Prime Minister of Lithuania, does not rule out the possible necessity to resume Lithuania's talks with the EU on the issue of extending the operating life of the Ignalina nuclear power plant (INPP) after 2009. «Anything can happen and we should be prepared for such variant. I also support the need for seeking arguments, and some arguments have already transpired. A lot has changed at the INPP itself since the beginning of our NPP

talks in 2001–2001. Its technical characteristics and control and security parameters have been noticeably improved,» Prime Minister reported in his interview to the Lithuanian radio.

The factor that may influence the decision to resume talks is the failure to reach an agreement with Poland on implementing the project of combining electric power systems of Lithuania and Poland, thus connecting them to the electrical systems of EU countries. According to Prime Minister, without this, under the conditions of growing prices for oil and gas Lithuania may find itself in a difficult situation. Touching upon the issue of constructing a new reactor, A. Brazauskas accentuated that «it is going to be a commercial facility, and it may be actuated if this region experiences a real need for electric power.» To quote the head of the Government, this issue should be negotiated with Latvia, Estonia, and probably Poland.

The issue of postponing a complete shutdown of the INPP was already discussed in the second half year of 2004, but the European Commission disapproved of it, following which Vilnius decided that Lithuania would meet its commitments to the European Union and shut down the INPP on the scheduled date.

POTENTIAL REPOSITORY SITES

One of the planned repository sites is in the settlement of Galilauke, which is only 700 m away from the Belarusian-Lithuanian border and 7 km away from the border with Latvia. After the information of the Ministry of Economics of Lithuania, no official resolution has been taken so far with regard to the repository for short-lived and medium-lived radioactive waste. The issue is still being studied. The IAEA experts have published a resolution acknowledging that the performed research conforms to the best international practical achievements and international standards. The prepared report on the environmental impact evaluation will need to be supplemented – not without pressure from Belarusian and Latvian neighbors. Latvia is the second country, which is concerned about the dangerous proximity to the repository. Ground water runs from Galilauke in the direction of its territory.

Public response was caused by the issue of a surface repository for low- and medium-activity waste, which has a relatively short life span of 300 years. It takes so much time for the substances and materials, encapsulated in containers and buried in reinforced concrete, will turn into regular waste. However, if the repository is built in Galilauke, near the border between Lithuania and Belarus, generations of people will have to live in immediate proximity to it.

At present, the list of potential sites for the repository has been supplemented with a new name of Sabatyske, a place situated 5 km away from the border with Belarus. Here geologists found another hill with a thick cap of clay, which can protect ground water from possible contamination with radioactive waste. Jonas Satkunas, Deputy Director of the Geological Survey of Lithuania, reported that at the moment additional research was underway in the area of Sabatyske. However, in his opinion, it will be difficult to make this hill as safe for the repository as the one in Galilauke.

STORY OF IGNALINA

Lithuania's Government adopted a resolution to shut down the Ignalina NPP (INPP) before 2009 as a condition of joining the European Union. Despite the attempts to keep the plant that covered 80% of national demand for electric power, by December 31st, 2004 the first block was removed from operation. Nowadays there is no doubt whatsoever that Lithuanians will accurately meet their EU commitments and in three years the second block will be shut down. Ignalina is basically a clone of Chernobyl and, in the opinion of EU experts, an additional risk factor (despite its recent upgrades).

According to Arturas Dainius, Secretary of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania (he deals with the issue of the INPP disassembly), several possible variants of action have already been worked out. «It is certainly possible to suspend the reactor and leave everything as it is for about 50 years, but who knows if this issue remains as topical then and if funds are available,» Mr. Dainius says.

One of the most expensive ways, which is full disassembly of the INPP, is regarded as the most likely. It is planned to finance the project from the EU budget. Ground disposal will reduce the cost of shutting down the plant and secure better safety of the waste, Arturas Dainius maintains. He does not deny that so far negotiations with Russia concerning the transfer of waste for keeping have not come to any results and Lithuanians will have to handle the problem of «what to do with the nuclear inheritance» on their own.

REPOSITORY DESIGN

So far all the waste that has accumulated since 1983, when the Ignalina NPP was commissioned, is contained in the plant zone in special storage facilities. Let us remind you that the Ignalina NPP is supposed to be shut down in 2010. After the shutdown of the reactor, it will take five years for the temperature to drop to 100 degrees, and then it will be possible to start disassembly work.

The long-lived waste, spent nuclear fuel in particular, will never leave this zone and remain in deep underground repositories in the territory of the plant. All that was not in the active zone (equipment, special-purpose uniforms, cooling water) will be placed in containers in the form of solid substances and then in the surface repository, the site for which has not been determined so far. In forty years a lawn will cover the area where there used to be two Ignalina's reactors, and there will be forest around the near-surface repository. Inside the mount-type structure, short-lived and medium-lived radioactive waste with a half-life period of 30 to 300 years will be «packed» in containers. The bottom of the repository should be at least two or three meters above the water level. Shown in section, its construction resembles a matrioshka doll, where containers are placed in sections of reinforced concrete inside cells of clay, dirt, sand, and gravel. The last layer is green grass. According to Saulius Kutas, head of VATESI (the State Inspectorate for Nuclear Power Engineering Safety), the sections will be filled seasonally, that is only in the summer time. In order to prevent soil percolation of radionuclides with water, tanks will be built under the basement, where any liquid is supposed to run down.

Belarusian experts believe that the planned capacity of the repository may be 100 thousand cubic meters. However, the Lithuanian side insists that Ignalina and its surrounding area

will accommodate only the waste resulting from the disassembly of the plant, and not brought from all over the world. Theoretically, the contents are not supposed to come out even if a jet crashes on the repository. In accordance with the existing international regulations, Belarus cannot veto construction of the waste disposal site, but is entitled to receive technical specifications of the designed facilities and invite independent experts to perform environmental expertise, considers First Deputy Minister of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Vassily Podolyako.

VILNIUS' OPINION

In Vilnius they are of the opinion that after the shutdown of the INPP Lithuania should remain a country having nuclear power; that is to say that a new modern Western-made reactor should be constructed. Experts and the Lithuanian Government believe that the Ignalina site is ideal for this construction, since it has all the required infrastructure and qualified specialist.

However, Prime Minister of Lithuania Algirdas Brazauskas has many times noted that Lithuania is unable to build a new nuclear power plant on its national budget. In saying that, he emphasized the need for attracting either private capital or investments from the neighboring Baltic States to implement this project. No concrete resolutions have been taken on this issue so far.

SAFETY LEVEL

In the late 2005 IAEA experts carried out examination of the methods of disassembling the plant and, in particular, of environmental impact assessments (EIA) for the repository for short-lived low- and medium-activity radioactive waste. The latest version of the EIA provides a prudent estimation of the annual external radiation dose to be received by local residents. It is lower than the natural background radiation. Lithuanian and Belarusian experts disagree on the assessment of the natural environment around the INPP. Lithuanian experts claim that this place is very scarcely inhabited and that there are neither valuable species of wood nor rare birds in the area. Belarusian ecologists name unique flora and fauna of the basin of the Braslav Lakes, which are situated in immediate proximity to the plant and make a single water system.

PROJECT COST

The Lithuanian side insists that it will be a modern safe repository, built with after the latest technology. The total cost of disassembly of the INPP is currently evaluated at over one billion euros. Construction of one section of the near-surface repository will cost approximately 1,200 euros, the total repository will cost up to 300 million euros, and the initial stage is estimated at 40 million euros.

Minister of Economy Kestutis Dauksis has announced that Lithuania should make a decision on constructing a new nuclear power plant in the near future. «No later than by the end of this year a decision should be taken on the fact of construction, the location and funding of the new nuclear power plant,» Minister said. In K. Dauksis' opinion, it is necessary to provide for investment to the amount of about 350 million euros for the initial stage of the project im-

plementation. The Government of Lithuania should own at least 34% of the shares of the new NPP. Other co-owners could be power companies of Estonia and Latvia, which have already announced their agreement, as well as other investors. The Minister considers that, if the decision on constructing a new power-generating unit is taken this year, its construction may start in 2008 and be completed in 2013.

K. Dauksis also mentioned that, along with solving the issue of constructing a new power-generating unit, it is necessary to negotiate the extension of the operating life of operational second nuclear unit of the INPP until the new power-generating unit is completed. But he evaluated the chance of reaching an agreement on this issue as slight.

There is another question to this: what is going to happen to the town of Visaginas, where almost all residents are employed at the INPP or somehow connected with it? The very shutdown of the plant is a big business. Well-known Lithuanian companies are currently competing for the right to perform disassembly work and its service. Disassembly of the plant is going to take approximately 35 years. Over this time the specialists of today will grow old and will not be able to work for age reasons. At the moment, a strategy is being developed in order to establish several smaller facilities on the basis of a single big one of the INPP. It is necessary to prioritize economic needs and get people interested in founding their small businesses. It is assumed that this will allow for solving the problem of employment in Visaginas.

Inna Maximchik. 16.01.06.

ANDREI STRATAN: «THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL OF MOLDOVA IS CONSISTENT INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION INSTITUTIONS»

Exclusive interview of Andrei Stratan, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova

The European Union has recently opened its representation in Chisinau. What are the priority tasks of Moldova in the field of integration into the European Union?

- A. S. First of all, I would like to note that currently Moldova has no a permanent representation of the European Union. At the same time, the EU Council, at the beginning of this year, appointed its Special Representative to Moldova Adriaan Jacobovits de Szeged, whose mission is to actively assist in peaceful solution of the Trans-Dniester problem and stability in the region.

During negotiations on the Plan of Actions, a political solution was made at the top level to open the Delegation of the European Commission in Chisinau, which will take place this September. In this context, I would like to note that on 1 January this year, Moldova opened its Permanent Representation in the European Union.

For the purpose of successful implementation of the Plan of Actions between the Republic of Moldova and the EU, the National Programme for introduction of the Plan of Actions was created, which represents a well-structured document in terms of strategy and tactics, with

clear tasks to involve state authorities and a specific schedule of implementation. Also, at this moment, the European strategy for the Republic of Moldova is being finalized; this is a document that presents even a more detailed project for achieving the priority goal in domestic and external policies of Moldova. Speaking about the initial tasks to achieve the essential goal by Moldova, i.e., a consistent integration into economic and social units of the European Union, the Republic of Moldova has assumed commitments to implement, by the end of 2007, coordinated measures stipulated by the Plan of Actions of Moldova and the EU. This plan attaches special attention to the very important package of priorities, namely:

- peaceful regulation of the Trans-Dniester conflict;
- enhancing of stability and efficacy of institutions that guarantee democracy and the rule of law;
- ensuring democratic elections in Moldova according to European standards;
- ensuring freedom of press and opinions;
- continuation of judicial reforms to achieve independence of courts;
- improvement of the investment climate through adequate structural reforms as regards ensuring non-discriminatory conditions and public openness; among other things, through combating corruption;
- intensification of fight with organized crime, including trafficking of people;
- ensuring effective management of migration flows; among other things, through initiation of the process to make an agreement on readmission between the EU and the Republic of Moldova.

It is known that Ukraine has become actively involved in the solution of the Trans-Dniester conflict. Its latest initiatives have been supported by all parties of the conflict, as well as by the European Union, NATO and other international institutions. Does this activity of Kiev mean that the role of Moscow in this region diminishes?

- **A. S.** At this stage, I will prefer not to hurry with conclusions about a consensus between all parties involved into the conflict as regards supporting the Ukrainian plan. The position of the Republic of Moldova on this plan was clearly stated in the package of documents, unanimously adopted by the Moldova Parliament on 10 June 2005.

As regards the roles played by Ukraine and Russia, the situation can be rather characterized as follows: Ukraine is gradually taking its proper place in the process of regulation, while the Russian Federation retains its exclusively important role. It should be remembered in this respect, that the Trans-Dniester conflict is located at the border with Ukraine, but not with Russia. Therefore, Kiev is directly interested in its solution. Today's leadership in Kiev takes significant measures so that Ukraine plays its proper role according to its position. We can only welcome activation of our neighbour and, at the same time, we believe that this will help find such a solution that will be beneficial, primarily, for the people of Moldova living on both sides of the Dniester River. So, the role of Russia is not diminished at all. Simply, we expect from Moscow a more constructive approach both in seeking a political solution of the Trans-Dniester problem and in its withdrawal of arms and troops according to Istanbul agreements taken by Russia at the OSCE summit in 1999.

Moldova is the only European country among «new neighbours» of the European Union who is member of WTO. To what extent, and how, does this status help Moldova to integrate into Europe?

- **A. S.** Accession to WTO, participation in the activities within the Pact of for South-East Europe and the South-East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECp), as well as in implementation of the Plan of Actions between Moldova and the EU are important tools to attain the main goal of Moldova, which is integration to the EU. WTO membership in itself includes a range of fields which coincide with the rules and legislation of the EU Common Market. Namely, they are: procurement, intellectual property, transparency of technical trade barriers, subsidies and rules of trade in services. For example, the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) provides for commercial presence abroad and, hence, gives EU enterprises in Moldova certain rights to the common market. None of these WTO rules entails integration similar to the EU. However, they represent a useful foundation for transparency and predictability of these rules. The Plan of Actions between Moldova and the EU gives Moldova a significant degree of economic integration and a deeper political cooperation. An important element along this line is the opportunity included into the Plan of Actions for giving a broader access for Moldovan commodities to the EU market through autonomous trade preferences (ATP).

At the same time, being member of the Pact of Stability in South-East Europe, Moldova has signed and commenced implementing bilateral free trade agreements with Bulgaria, Romania and five countries which are parties to the Process of stability and association. In this context, we actively support the idea of creating a free trade area in the South-East Europe through integration to the Central European Free Trade Area (CEFTA) of countries which signed the respective Memorandum on trade liberalization or creation of a new free trade area in the South-East Europe (SEEFTEA).

Relations between the European Union and such new «new neighbour» as Belarus leave much to be desired. In what way would you characterize the current state of relations between Moldova and Belarus?

- **A. S.** Moldova has always been in favour of developing relations with all countries of the world. The basis of Moldovan-Belarusian relations is rather close trade and economic ties which are based on a number of intergovernmental agreements, and they are mutually beneficial. A special role is played by the Intergovernmental Moldovan-Belarusian Commission on trade and economic cooperation.

Moldovan-Belarusian relations in the field of trade and economic cooperation are characterized by high dynamics; in 2004, Moldova and Belarus reached an unprecedented high level of bilateral trade exchanges. The Republic of Belarus takes a firm 6th place among 128 foreign trade partners of the Republic of Moldova. In 2004, the total trade turnover between the two countries made 128 million USD. This was 26 percent higher compared to the previous period. The main items of Belarusian export to Moldova include oil products, tractors, ceramic tiles, oil bitumen, refrigerators and freezers, medicines, ethylene polymers, spare parts for motor vehicle and tractors, chip-wood plates, and tyres.

In 2004, new Belarusian commodities came to Moldova for the first time. They include «Belkommunmash» trolleybuses used in the town of Belci. Metal-working machine tools are

supplied to re-equip industrial enterprises of Moldova. Belarusian medical devices are used by medical institutions of the country.

In its turn, the Republic of Moldova is a traditional supplier to Belarus of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables, wines and cognac, seed and fodder corn, sunflower oil, and other agricultural produce.

In the current year, cooperation between the parties on supply of Moldovan fruits and vegetables to the consumer market of Belarus continues to enhance. In 2004, the total supply of products was 42,300 tons, which was 5,000 tons more than in 2003. This year, the Republic of Moldova plans to export to Belarus about 80,000 tons of fruits and vegetables.

We do not disregard the traditionally good relations between peoples of our countries. Preservation of Belarusian culture, national identity and traditions, study of one's own history and language, expansion and enhancing of relations between compatriots living in Moldova and their historical motherland go on, in general, successfully. However, new times require new, multi-faceted and dynamic solutions.

Leaders of the GUAM countries state that this organization is given a new dynamism and its role in the post-Soviet space will grow. What is Moldova's attitude towards prospects of existence of the CIS?

- A. S. At the GUAM summit held in Chisinau on 22 April 2005, Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine made a decision to activate their actions within this association, and considered opportunities for cooperation with countries that are interested in GUAM activities.

In this context, the Republic of Moldova, as the Chair of the GUAM, supports the position to expand the format of cooperation of this association, as well as transformation of the GUAM into a regional organization.

The priorities of the GUAM development, discussed at the Summit, include cooperation in such strategic fields as: energy, security, cooperation with international organizations and member countries of the European Union or candidates to the EU. This fact does not contradict cooperation between GUAM countries and other CIS countries.

According to the Constitution, Moldova is a neutral state. How does this position agree with its strive to become member of NATO?

- A. S. First of all, we should note that at the official level Moldova has not made declarations about its strive to become member of NATO. At this stage, our main goal is to expand and intensify cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We do not speak so far about review of the neutral country status.

During a recent visit to Brussels, the head of the state addressed this Alliance with a proposal to develop and introduce an Individual partnership action plan (IPAP) within the programme «Partnership for Peace», which, we hope, will improve our interaction with the Alliance.

If we speak about concrete cooperation, then, for instance, in the field of environmental security, NATO helped to implement a project on disposal of the missile fuel «mélange» which was present in the country and presented a threat due to its chemical properties. Today, NATO helps us implement several projects. For example, to eliminate hazardous pesticides which

were used in the past and are harmful for the environment. We also have an active cooperation along the Academy of Sciences. Owing to assistance by NATO, the Republic of Moldova was among the first states which totally eliminated anti-personnel mines according to the Ottawa Convention of 1997. You see that benefits from this cooperation are obvious, and we strive to increase them. The Republic of Moldova views NATO as an organization which gives serious opportunities for developing the country both in the civilian and military fields. Units of the Moldovan Army take regular part in military exercises organized within the context of the «Partnership for Peace». Some officers take part in humanitarian actions of NATO. It is also important in this respect to indicate to the assistance of NATO experts to reform our National Army. We should also remember that strengthening of cooperation with NATO will have a positive impact on our European integration strive, because we consider the Plan of Actions between Moldova and the EU and the Individual partnership action plan with NATO as two mutually supplementing strategic documents.

Which coming events of this year do you think the most important for Moldova?

- **A. S.** It is rather difficult to identify a specific event. We can only note that, in assessment of foreign observers, the Moldovan foreign policy has become more active in the recent years, as well as more consistent and clear. We have achieved some results along strategic lines and will make every effort to multiply these achievements.

European integration, the process of resolution of the Trans-Dniester conflict, maintenance of active ties with traditional partners and development of relations with new partners as well as regional cooperation represent a rather broad range. Important events will occur along all these lines. They include very significant diplomatic activities, such as the summit of the heads of states planned for the 60th session of the UN General Assembly in mid September this year.

Questions were asked by Roman Yakovlevsky. 30.06.05.